

**The Gendering of Secondary  
Music Education:  
Curriculum, Pedagogy  
and the  
Classroom Experience**

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the extent to which curriculum content and pedagogy in current secondary music education can be understood as gendered. The study is situated primarily within a qualitative paradigm whilst also possessing some quantitative aspects. It consists of a mixed-methods investigation into the practices and beliefs of music teachers and their pupils via a) a survey across 78 co-educational, non-selective and non-denominational English secondary schools; and b) detailed case-studies of three purposively selected music departments of contrasting complexions. The research springs from, replicates and extends that conducted for L. Green's early study (1993) concerning gender and music and its findings are examined in the light of a range of historical and theoretical concepts that underpin this domain including Green (1997), O'Neill (1997), Paechter, (2000, 2009), Harrison (2009), Legg (2010), Abramo (2011), Armstrong (2011) and Bjork (2011).

Throughout the thesis I compare and contrast three data sets (L. Green's survey, the modern-day survey and the present case studies) in order to explore similarities and differences between the thoughts and behaviours of both past and current respondents. In addition I aim to extend existing theoretical paradigms by identifying how particular aspects of curriculum and pedagogy can be defined as 'feminine-gendered' or 'masculine-gendered', (regardless of the sex of the teacher) through the development of a framework of descriptive criteria. In particular I review data emanating from the case-studies in the light of this, examining how gendered practices and approaches affect pupils' responses.

Despite evidence of change concerning gendered participation in school music nowadays (such as boys' improved involvement in 14+ examinations) I show how wide-ranging, complex and deeply-embedded historical constructs continue to govern the dynamics of the music classroom. These reveal themselves, both overtly and covertly, via the expression of a broad range of beliefs and behaviours which usefully elucidate and illuminate the concepts expressed throughout this study.

## **DECLARATION AND WORD COUNT**

I hereby declare that, except where explicit attribution is made, the work presented in this thesis is entirely my own.

**Word Count** (exclusive of appendices and list of references): **103,743**

**A. T. Green**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<b>Page</b>
<b>KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>GLOSSARY</b>	<b>12-14</b>
<b><u>Chapter 1: The Research Project</u></b>	<b>15-31</b>
<b>1.1 Introduction and Rationale</b>	<b>15</b>
1.11 <i>National Examination Data and Music</i>	<i>16</i>
1.12 <i>Personal Experiences</i>	<i>20</i>
<b>1.2 The Research Focus</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>1.3 The Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>25</b>
1.31 <i>Key Concepts</i>	<i>26</i>
1.32 <i>Defining Gender</i>	<i>27</i>
1.33 <i>Patriarchy and Musical Production</i>	<i>29</i>
1.34 <i>A Historical Perspective of Gendered Musical Practices in Private and Public</i>	<i>30</i>
<b><u>Chapter 2: Gender and Schooling</u></b>	<b>32-50</b>
<b>2.1 Key Considerations</b>	<b>32</b>
2.11 <i>Performances of Masculinities and Femininities in Schools</i>	<i>32</i>
2.12 <i>The Effect of Hegemony upon Gendered Performances in Schools</i>	<i>33</i>
2.13 <i>The Feminisation of Schooling</i>	<i>34</i>
2.14 <i>The Gendering of the Curriculum</i>	<i>35</i>
<b>2.2 How Boys are Characterised in School</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>2.3 How Girls are Characterised in School</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.4 The Educational Achievement Gap</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>2.5 Teachers, Gender and the Classroom</b>	<b>42</b>
2.51 <i>The Effect of Teacher Gender upon Pupil Attainment</i>	<i>43</i>
<b>2.6 Refining the Focus: Music, Education and Gender</b>	<b>44</b>
2.61 <i>A  Brief overview of Research in Music, Education and Gender</i>	<i>45</i>
2.62 <i>A Conceptual Framework for the Gendering of Curriculum and Pedagogy</i>	<i>46</i>
2.63 <i>Femininities, Masculinities and the Participants in this Study</i>	<i>48</i>
<b><u>Chapter 3: Methodology, Design and Methods</u></b>	<b>51-74</b>
<b>3.1 Methodology</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>3.2 First Stage of Research: Survey Design, Content, Distribution and Analysis</b>	<b>52</b>
3.21 <i>Survey Design</i>	<i>53</i>
3.22 <i>Survey Content</i>	<i>54</i>
3.23 <i>Survey Distribution</i>	<i>54</i>
3.24 <i>Data Analysis of the First Stage</i>	<i>55</i>
<b>3.3 Sampling Strategy and Identification of Suitable Focus Departments</b>	<b>56</b>
3.31 <i>Reasons for Selecting the Respondents and their Departments</i>	<i>57</i>
3.311 <i>Suburban Street</i>	<i>57</i>

	<b>Page</b>
3.312 <i>Seaside Town</i>	59
3.313 <i>Rural Country</i>	60
<b>3.4 Second Stage of Research: Collecting Further Qualitative Data</b>	<b>62</b>
3.41 <i>Empirical Settings; Snapshots of the Schools and their Music Departments</i>	62
3.411 <i>Suburban Street</i>	62
3.412 <i>Seaside Town</i>	63
3.413 <i>Rural Country</i>	65
3.42 <i>Methods and Data Analysis at the Second Stage of Research</i>	66
3.421 <i>Lesson Observations</i>	66
3.422 <i>Teacher Interviews</i>	67
3.423 <i>Pupil Interviews</i>	68
3.424 <i>Data Analysis of the Second Stage</i>	70
<b>3.5 The Research Participants and Ethical Issues</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>3.6 Organisation of the Remainder of the Thesis</b>	<b>73</b>
<b><u>Chapter 4: Curriculum and Pedagogy in Music</u></b>	<b>75-95</b>
<b>4.1 A Brief History of the Gendering of Music Curriculum &amp; Pedagogy</b>	<b>75</b>
4.11 <i>The 1970s</i>	75
4.12 <i>The 1980s and 90s</i>	77
4.13 <i>Recent Initiatives</i>	79
4.14 <i>Current Teacher Training</i>	80
<b>4.2 Questionnaire Responses regarding Musical Activities</b>	<b>81</b>
4.21 <i>The KS3 Music Curriculum</i>	83
4.211 <i>Year 7</i>	84
4.212 <i>Year 9</i>	85
<b>4.3 Questionnaire Responses regarding Musical Genres</b>	<b>86</b>
<b>4.4 The KS3 Curriculum</b>	<b>88</b>
4.41 <i>KS3 Topics</i>	88
4.411 <i>Year 7</i>	88
4.412 <i>Year 9</i>	89
<b>4.5 Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Focus Schools</b>	<b>90</b>
4.51 <i>Suburban Street</i>	90
4.52 <i>Seaside Town</i>	91
4.53 <i>Rural Country</i>	91
<b>4.6 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>92</b>
<b><u>Chapter 5: Boys' and Girls' Musical Attributes</u></b>	<b>96-132</b>
<b>5.1 What are the Perceived Musical Attributes of Boys and Girls?</b>	<b>96</b>
<b>5.2 Teachers on Pupils' Gendered Attributes and their Outcomes</b>	<b>97</b>
5.21 <i>Teachers on Boys' Attributes</i>	97
5.22 <i>Teachers on Girls' Attributes</i>	101
<b>5.3 Pupils on Gendered Attributes and their Outcomes</b>	<b>105</b>
5.31 <i>Pupils on Boys' Attributes</i>	105
5.32 <i>Pupils on Girls' Attributes</i>	111
<b>5.4 Perceptions of Boys' and Girls' Enjoyment of School Music</b>	<b>118</b>
5.41 <i>Perceptions of Pupils' Enjoyment in this Study</i>	119

	<b>Page</b>
5.42 <i>Teachers on Pupils' Enjoyment</i>	119
5.43 <i>Pupils on Boys' Enjoyment</i>	121
5.44 <i>Pupils on Girls' Enjoyment</i>	125
<b>5.5 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>130</b>
<b><u>Chapter 6: Performing and Gender</u></b>	<b>133-169</b>
<b>6.1 Gendered Traditions in Instrumental Performing</b>	<b>133</b>
6.11 <i>Theories of Musical Meaning</i>	135
<b>6.2 Pupil Identity and Classroom Performing</b>	<b>135</b>
<b>6.3 Classroom Instrumental Performing in this Study</b>	<b>136</b>
6.31 <i>Teachers on Classroom Instrumental Performing</i>	137
6.32 <i>Classroom Instrumental Performing in the Focus Schools</i>	138
6.33 <i>Pupils on Classroom Instrumental Performing</i>	139
<b>6.4 Gendered Traditions in Singing</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>6.5 Singing in this Study</b>	<b>143</b>
6.51 <i>Teachers on Singing</i>	144
6.52 <i>Singing in the Focus Schools</i>	148
6.53 <i>Pupils on Singing</i>	149
<b>6.6 Informal Methods of Performing</b>	<b>152</b>
<b>6.7 Informal Methods of Performing in this Study</b>	<b>154</b>
6.71 <i>Teachers on Informal Methods of Performing</i>	154
6.72 <i>Informal Methods of Performing in the Focus Schools</i>	155
6.73 <i>Boys and Girls on Methods of Informal Performing</i>	156
<b>6.8 Pupils Engaging in Group Work</b>	<b>160</b>
6.81 <i>Pupils Engaging in Group Work in this study</i>	161
6.82 <i>Teachers on Group Work</i>	161
6.83 <i>Boys and Girls on Group Work</i>	162
<b>6.9 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>165</b>
<b><u>Chapter 7: Composing, Technology and Gender</u></b>	<b>170-196</b>
<b>7.1 Gendered Traditions in School Composing</b>	<b>170</b>
<b>7.2 Composing in this Study</b>	<b>171</b>
7.21 <i>Teachers on Composing</i>	172
7.22 <i>Composing in the Focus Schools</i>	177
7.23 <i>Pupils on Composing</i>	179
<b>7.3 Gendered Traditions in the Use of Technology</b>	<b>182</b>
<b>7.4 Use of Technology in this Study</b>	<b>186</b>
7.41 <i>Teachers on the use of Technology</i>	186
7.42 <i>Use of Technology in the Focus Schools</i>	187
7.43 <i>Boys and Girls and the use of Technology</i>	189
<b>7.5 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>193</b>
<b><u>Chapter 8: Listening, Appraising, Notation and Gender</u></b>	<b>197-217</b>
<b>8.1 Gendered Traditions in Listening and Appraising</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>8.2 Listening and Appraising in this Study</b>	<b>197</b>
8.21 <i>Teachers on Listening and Appraising</i>	198

	<b>Page</b>
8.22 <i>Listening and Appraising in the Focus Schools</i>	202
8.23 <i>Pupils on Listening and Appraising</i>	203
<b>8.3 Gendered Traditions in the Use of Notation</b>	<b>205</b>
<b>8.4 Use of Notation in this Study</b>	<b>206</b>
8.41 <i>Teachers on the Use of Notation</i>	206
8.42 <i>Use of Notation in the Focus Schools</i>	209
8.43 <i>Pupils on the use of Notation</i>	212
<b>8.5 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>215</b>
<b><u>Chapter 9: Musical Identities, Musical Genres and Gender</u></b>	<b>218-52</b>
<b>9.1 Musical Identities and Genres</b>	<b>218</b>
<b>9.2 Musical Identities and Genres in this Study</b>	<b>218</b>
9.21 <i>Teachers' Musical Identities and Personal Philosophies</i>	219
9.211 <i>Suburban Street</i>	220
9.212 <i>Seaside Town</i>	222
9.213 <i>Rural Country</i>	224
9.22 <i>Teachers on Pupils' Musical Identities</i>	226
9.23 <i>Pupils' Musical Identities</i>	227
<b>9.3 A History of Musical Genres and the Curriculum</b>	<b>232</b>
<b>9.4 Musical Genres and Pedagogical Problems</b>	<b>233</b>
<b>9.5 The Four Key Curriculum Genres in this Study</b>	<b>234</b>
9.51 <i>Teachers on Classical Music</i>	235
9.52 <i>Teachers on Popular Genre</i>	238
9.53 <i>Teachers on World Musics</i>	241
9.54 <i>Teachers on Jazz</i>	244
9.55 <i>Pupils and Musical Genres</i>	246
<b>9.6 Summary and Conclusions</b>	<b>250</b>
<b><u>Chapter 10: Extra-Curricular Participation and Gender</u></b>	<b>253-80</b>
<b>10.1 Gendered Beliefs and Behaviours Regarding Musical Instruments</b>	<b>253</b>
<b>10.2 Instrumental Teachers and their Pupils in this Study</b>	<b>255</b>
10.21 <i>Teachers on Pupils' Instrumental Choices</i>	257
10.22 <i>Instrumental Tuition in the Focus Schools</i>	261
10.221 <i>Suburban Street</i>	261
10.222 <i>Rural Country</i>	262
10.223 <i>Seaside Town</i>	262
10.23 <i>Pupils on Instrumental Choices</i>	263
<b>10.3 Gendered Beliefs and Behaviours Regarding Extra-Curricular Participation</b>	<b>269</b>
<b>10.4 Extra-Curricular Participation in this Study</b>	<b>270</b>
10.41 <i>Teachers on Extra-Curricular Participation</i>	271
10.42 <i>Extra-Curricular Participation in the Focus Schools</i>	274
10.421 <i>Suburban Street</i>	274
10.422 <i>Seaside Town</i>	274
10.423 <i>Rural Country</i>	275
10.43 <i>Pupils on Extra-Curricular Participation</i>	275
<b>10.5 Summary and Conclusion</b>	<b>278</b>

	<b>Page</b>
<b><u>Chapter 11: KS4 Music and Gender</u></b>	<b>281-313</b>
<b>11.1 Gendered Traditions in Examination Music</b>	<b>281</b>
<b>11.2 Music at KS4 in this Study</b>	<b>284</b>
<i>11.21 Teachers on KS4 Music</i>	<i>287</i>
<i>11.22 KS4 Music in the Focus Schools</i>	<i>288</i>
<i>11.221 Suburban Street</i>	<i>288</i>
<i>11.222 Seaside Town</i>	<i>293</i>
<i>11.223 Rural Country</i>	<i>295</i>
<i>11.23 Pupils on KS4 Music</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>11.231 Year 7 Perceptions of KS4 Music</i>	<i>298</i>
<i>11.232 Year 9 Perceptions of KS4 Music</i>	<i>302</i>
<i>11.233 KS4 Students' Reasons for Choosing Music</i>	<i>305</i>
<b>11.3 Summary and Conclusion</b>	<b>310</b>
<b><u>Chapter 12: Final Summary and Conclusions</u></b>	<b>314-28</b>
<b>12.1 Limitations of the Research</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>12.2 The Framework of Descriptive Criteria for Identifying the Gendering of Curriculum and Pedagogy: Benefits and Drawbacks</b>	<b>316</b>
<b>12.3 Unexpected Outcomes</b>	<b>317</b>
<b>12.4 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Practice</b>	<b>318</b>
<i>12.41 Boys and KS3 Music</i>	<i>318</i>
<i>12.42 Girls and KS3 Music</i>	<i>320</i>
<i>12.43 KS4 Music</i>	<i>321</i>
<i>12.44 Implications for Teachers</i>	<i>323</i>
<b>12.5 Possibilities for Future Research</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>12.6 Final Conclusions</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: The Questionnaire</b>	<b>329</b>
<b>APPENDIX B: General Quantitative Data from the 78 Departments</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>APPENDIX C: Interview Questions</b>	<b>343</b>
<b>APPENDIX D: Further Analysis of Quantitative Data</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>i) Exploring the Data in terms of Geographical Areas</b>	<b>344</b>
<b>ii) Exploring the Data in terms of Specialist Status</b>	<b>345</b>
<b>iii) Exploring the Data in terms of Sex of Teacher</b>	<b>347</b>
<b>APPENDIX E: Chi Test Outcomes for Pupils' Replies to Key Questions</b>	<b>349</b>
<b>APPENDIX F: Chi Test Outcomes for Comparison Between Teachers' Sex and Pupils' Replies to Key Questions</b>	<b>351</b>
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>353-73</b>



## LIST OF TABLES

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Table 1</b> Showing gender breakdown of GCSE Music results 1988-2002	<b>16</b>
<b>Table 2</b> Showing gender breakdown of GCSE Music results 2003-2013	<b>18</b>
<b>Table 3</b> Showing gender breakdown of Level 2 BTEC Music results for 2011-2 & 2012-3	<b>19</b>
<b>Table 4</b> Framework of criteria regarding the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy in music	<b>49</b>
<b>Table 5</b> Showing total number of observations and interviews carried out in the focus schools	<b>66</b>
<b>Table 6</b> Showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' success in musical activities in relation to gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green)	<b>81</b>
<b>Table 7</b> Showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 7 pupils' preferences	<b>84</b>
<b>Table 8</b> Showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 9 pupils' preferences	<b>85</b>
<b>Table 9</b> Showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' willingness to engage in musical genres and gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green)	<b>86</b>
<b>Table 10</b> Showing relationship between instruments taught in schools and gender	<b>257</b>
<b>Table 11</b> Showing numbers of KS3 students having learnt a musical instrument outside of the classroom according to gender	<b>263</b>
<b>Table 12</b> Showing numbers of KS4 students having learnt a musical instrument outside of the classroom according to gender	<b>268</b>
<b>Table 13</b> Showing relationship between extra-curricular activities in schools and gender	<b>270</b>
<b>Table 14</b> Showing current and prospective GCSE/BTEC numbers at Suburban Street in relation to gender	<b>291</b>
<b>Table 15</b> Showing current BTEC numbers in Seaside Town in relation to gender	<b>295</b>
<b>Table 16</b> Showing current GCSE numbers in Rural Country in relation to gender	<b>296</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Figure 1</b> Chart showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' success in musical activities in relation to gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green)	<b>83</b>
<b>Figure 2</b> Chart showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 7 pupil preferences	<b>84</b>
<b>Figure 3</b> Chart showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 9 pupil preferences	<b>85</b>
<b>Figure 4</b> Chart showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' willingness to engage in musical genres and gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green)	<b>87</b>
<b>Figure 5</b> Chart showing most popular Year 7 curriculum topics across 78 schools in study	<b>88</b>
<b>Figure 6</b> Chart showing most popular Year 9 curriculum topics across 78 schools in study	<b>89</b>
<b>Figure 7</b> Chart showing breakdown of teachers' gender according to instrumental family	<b>255</b>
<b>Figure 8</b> Chart showing breakdown of woodwind & brass teachers according to gender	<b>256</b>
<b>Figure 9</b> Chart showing breakdown of percussion & guitar teachers according to gender	<b>256</b>
<b>Figure 10</b> Chart showing relationship between instruments taught in schools and gender	<b>257</b>
<b>Figure 11</b> Chart showing relationship between extra-curricular activities in schools and gender	<b>271</b>
<b>Figure 12</b> Chart showing KS4 music courses available across all schools in study	<b>285</b>
<b>Figure 13</b> Chart showing balance of gender at KS4 across all schools in study	<b>285</b>
<b>Figure 14</b> Chart showing balance of gender at GCSE across all schools in study	<b>286</b>
<b>Figure 15</b> Chart showing balance of gender at BTEC across all schools in study	<b>286</b>
<b>Figure 16</b> Chart showing previous 5 years' Music GCSE results in relation to gender at Suburban Street	<b>289</b>
<b>Figure 17</b> Chart showing previous 3 years' Music BTEC First Certificate results in relation to gender at Suburban Street	<b>290</b>
<b>Figure 18</b> Chart showing previous 3 years' Music BTEC First Certificate results in relation to gender at Seaside Town	<b>293</b>
<b>Figure 19</b> Chart showing previous 5 years' Music GCSE results in relation to gender at Rural Country	<b>295</b>

## KEY TO TRANSCRIPTION

A key to interpreting the interview transcriptions is provided below. Respondents' words were reproduced as accurately as possible although some verbal fillers were removed in order to assist readability and general flow. Standard punctuation and spelling of words, including slang, have been used although the grammar reflects the interviewees' actual speech patterns.

- ... The ellipsis mostly indicates a pause in speech flow (often where an 'er', 'um' or 'like' occurs) or where an irrelevant interjection has been made. Less commonly it is used to show where part of the conversation has been omitted due to its perceived irrelevance.
  
- A hyphen indicates the briefest of pauses in the speech flow.
  
- italics* These are used to denote a word that has been given particular emphasis by the speaker.
  
- (italics)* In brackets, these indicate relevant sounds or actions (such as murmurs, laughter or face pulling) emanating from the speaker or other group members.
  
- CAPITALS These are used to show where something has been shouted.

## GLOSSARY

The following terms occur throughout the thesis and are commonly used to describe various aspects of the current education system in England and Wales/Northern Ireland. Each title is followed by a brief explanation:

**Academy:** A school that is run by a governing body (and not the local authority), receiving finance directly from the government; the contract is solely between the proprietor and the Secretary of State. Academies do not have to follow the national curriculum but must teach a broad subject range including English, Maths, Science and Religious Education (RE). An Academy must also: have an emphasis on a particular subject area or subject areas, at secondary level; provide education for pupils of different abilities including those with special educational needs; and provide education for pupils who are wholly or mainly drawn from the area in which the school is situated.

**Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC):** A British body (formed in 1984) that awards vocational qualifications across a range of disciplines, commonly referred to as BTECs. These currently have parity with other examination qualifications such as GCSE (BTEC levels 1 and 2), ‘A’ level (BTEC level 3) and university degrees (BTEC levels 4 to 7)<sup>1</sup>. BTEC courses have become increasingly popular in schools over the past decade however a current restructuring of content, alongside a downgrading of the GCSE equivalent value of these awards from 2014, may cause this situation to change in the near future.

**Early Years:** The national programme for children under 5 years and covering their development across nursery education and the first year of primary school (also known as reception).

**Further Education (FE) College:** An institution in which students can pursue post-compulsory education after the age of 16 as an alternative to school. Courses on offer can be similar to those taught in schools (eg AS/A2, BTEC) but can also include sub-degree courses such as HND (Higher National Diploma) and Foundation Degrees, alongside basic skills training for those at the other end of the educational spectrum.

**General Certificate of Education ‘Advanced Level’ (GCE ‘A’ Level):** A KS5 qualification offered to students after completing their KS4 secondary education. An ‘A’ level course in a subject is usually followed over two years and split into two parts; Advanced Subsidiary Level (AS) studied in year 1 and A2 Level studied in year 2.

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<sup>1</sup> For specific details see: <http://www.edexcel.com/BTEC/Pages/default.aspx>

**General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE):** An academic qualification (awarded in a specified subject) generally taken by students aged 14–16 in secondary education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and examined since 1988.

**HoD:** Standing for Head of Department and indicating the person in charge of a music department and holding various responsibilities including monetary expenditure, resourcing and development of departmental policies (such as curriculum and pedagogy decisions) amongst others.

**Key Stage 1 (KS1):** Years 1 and 2 (the infant years) of primary schooling (for pupils aged 5-7) culminating in teacher assessments in English, Maths and Science in which pupils should achieve an average attainment of National Curriculum level 2 by its close.

**Key Stage 2 (KS2):** Years 3-6 (the junior years) of primary schooling (for pupils aged 7-11) culminating in national tests and teacher assessments in English, Maths and Science in which pupils should achieve an average attainment of National Curriculum level 4 by its close.

**Key Stage 3 (KS3):** Years 7-9 of secondary schooling (for pupils aged 11-14) consisting of yearly teacher assessments in all statutory subjects in which pupils should achieve an average attainment of National Curriculum level 5-6 in each by its close.

**Key Stage 4 (KS4):** Years 10-11 of secondary schooling (for pupils aged 14-16) in which most pupils follow national examination courses (e.g. GCSE, BTEC etc.).

**Key Stage 5 (KS5):** An unofficial label used to describe Years 12 and 13 of post-compulsory secondary education for students aged 16-18, also known as sixth form. Students may sit both GCE Advanced Subsidiary Level (AS) examinations after one year of study and A2 level examinations, after two. Alternatively students may follow courses culminating in a range of vocational awards such as BTEC, City and Guilds etc.

**NCFE:** This body (no longer an acronym but previously standing for the Northern Advisory Council for Further Education) is a national awarding organisation. It develops and certifies a range of qualifications at various incremental levels of attainment across a variety of disciplines including music.

**National Curriculum (England, Wales and Northern Ireland):** A common curriculum for maintained schools, established via the Education Reform Act of 1988, modified across subsequent decades and with a new version currently under implementation from September 2014. It consists of a set of subject programmes and common assessment standards intending to ensure that children learn the same things. At the moment primary schools must teach English, Maths, Science, Design &

Technology, History, Geography, Art & Design, Music, Physical Education (PE) and Information & Communication Technology (ICT) whilst also providing Religious Education (RE). Secondary schools must also teach Modern Foreign Languages (MFL), Citizenship and Religious Education (RE), and provide sex and careers education<sup>2</sup>.

**National Curriculum for Music:** A programme of study and standards of assessment (originally established in 1992 but having undergone various changes and developments in subsequent years) that is taught to all children in maintained schools, aged 5-14<sup>3</sup>.

**Ofqual:** The independent regulator of qualifications, examinations and assessments in England and a wide range of vocational qualifications both in England and Northern Ireland.

**Primary School:** A maintained school catering for children aged 4-11, being under the control of the local education authority and statutorily obligated to implement the National Curriculum whilst also providing religious education.

**Maintained School:** A school maintained by a local authority. There are several types including: community school, special school, voluntary aided school, voluntary controlled school, voluntary aided special school, voluntary controlled special school and foundation school.

**Secondary School:** A maintained school generally catering for children aged 11-18, being under the control of the local education authority and statutorily obligated to implement the National Curriculum whilst also providing religious, careers and sex education.

**Specialist School (no longer in existence):** A maintained secondary school acting as a local centre of excellence in its chosen specialism (e.g. Performing Arts, Business and Enterprise, Maths and Science etc.) and which, to that end, benefited from both public funding under the ‘Specialist Schools Programme’ and private sector sponsorship. From April 2011 dedicated government funding for such schools ceased.

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<sup>2</sup> For details concerning the current version of the National Curriculum (as taught from September 2014), including statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for KS1, KS2 and KS3 see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/national-curriculum>

<sup>3</sup> For details concerning the current version of the National Curriculum for Music (as taught from September 2014), including statutory programmes of study and attainment targets for KS1, KS2 and KS3, see: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-curriculum-in-england-music-programmes-of-study>

## **Chapter 1: Introducing the Research Project**

### **1.1 Introduction and Rationale**

In the 1960s and 70s, a growing body of educational research focused upon the perceived gender inequalities that existed within the classroom. It explored reasons as to why girls were unable to achieve educational parity with boys and concluded that this was a product of the system's failure to challenge the stereo-typing of male and female roles across the wider society. Many (if not all) girls at this time were disadvantaged in multiple ways during their schooling: lacking enough non-sexist or female-orientated resources and suitable role models (Miller, 1992, 1996); experiencing classroom practices and pedagogies that predominantly operated in favour of boys' preferred interests and behaviours (Francis & Skelton, 2005, Skelton et. al., 2007, Skelton & Francis, 2009); and being constantly exposed to traditional patriarchal cognitive and value systems, conveyed through the content and delivery of most school curricula (Wolpe, 1988, Paechter, 2000, 2006a, 2009).

Increasing appeals for gender equity during this period, as demanded by a diverse range of individuals and pressure groups (including many feminists) eventually led to successive governments implementing various counteractive initiatives; new curricula and pedagogical strategies were developed with the aim of encouraging girls to avail themselves of those advantages previously denied them. Numbers staying on at school, taking a wider range of examination subjects and pursuing higher education, increased rapidly in response (Holmes, 2007).

However a different set of concerns arose in the 1990s, when outcomes from mass data collection, resulting from the statutory assessment and testing procedures demanded by the National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (as established by the Education Reform Act of 1988), revealed girls to be out-performing boys across all age ranges. Even at GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Examination) there appeared to be a significant achievement gap in favour of girls with the widest occurring in the Humanities, Languages and Arts (DCSF, 2007), subjects that have a history of being perceived as 'feminised' (Colley et al., 1994, Paechter, 2000, Colley & Comber, 2003b). A primary outcome of this situation was the setting of a new agenda during the 1990s, intending to raise boys' achievement to match that of their now more successful female counterparts.

### 1.11 National Examination Data and Music

Research concerning the gender make-up of the average GCSE music examination group in the late 1990s indicated that girls were ‘significantly more likely to take the subject than boys’ (Bray, 2000: 81) and would typically comprise 56%-60% of the intake. Table 1, showing national data for music GCSE since 1987 (the first year of examination) until 2002, reveals this patterning (Joint Council for the GCSE 1988-1993, DFE/DfEE//DCFS, 1993-2002). (Subsequent years’ data appear in Table 2.)

	% of boys from total school population taking GCSE music	% of girls from total school population taking GCSE music	% of boys obtaining grade A*-C in GCSE music	% of girls obtaining grade A*-C in GCSE music
1987-8	3.5	7.5	53	59.5
1988-9	4.5	7.5	53	62
1989-90	5	7.5	56	64.5
1990-91	5	7.5	55	68
1991-2	5.5	8	57	68
1992-3	5	7.5	56	68
1993-4	5	7.5	56.5	69
1994-5	5	7	58	71
1995-6	5	7.5	59	72
1996-7	5.5	7.5	61.5	72.5
1997-8	5.5	7.5	62	72.5
1998-9	5.5	8	63.5	73
1999-2000	6	8	64.5	73
2000-1	6	8	65	73
2001-2	6	8	65	74

**Table 1: Showing gender breakdown of GCSE Music results 1988-2002 (to nearest 0.5%)**



Some slight changes are evident across this period: firstly a 3:2 ratio in favour of girls gradually reduced to a 4:3 balance by the start of the new century; and secondly, all pupils' achievement levels (regarding success in the higher grade categories of A\*-C) constantly rose, although girls consistently out-performed boys. The greater likelihood of girls learning musical instruments has frequently been cited as a primary explanation for this differential (Mills, 1997, Hallam, 1998b, Hallam & Prince, 2000, Bray, 2000) since its provision potentially enables subtle advantages, such as developing familiarity with the classical canon and musical notation.

At this point it is important to acknowledge that this data was provided by *all* types of schools including public, private, maintained, specialist, grammar and single-sexed. However, gender balance in different types of establishments varied enormously during this era; boys' schools usually had a lower take-up of music than girls', whilst selective grammars (whether mixed or single-sex) had higher than average numbers of pupils opting, and non-selective comprehensive schools lower (Bray, 2000).

Results from 2002 onwards (Table 2) indicate further changes (DCFS/DfE, 2003-2013). Although numbers of females taking GCSE music (as part of the national school population) remained fairly constant, the percentage of boys gradually rose, overtaking that of girls in 2006 and maintaining this trend until 2009, after which totals for both declined. This downturn has been slightly more evident amongst boys and potentially suggests that they have shown greater preferences for other types of KS4 music examinations such as BTEC (see Table 3). Meanwhile, girls have consistently received higher GCSE grade averages, especially in the all-important A\*-C categories; indeed around four-fifths achieved within these boundaries in the past four academic years as opposed to only around three-quarters of boys (DfE 2010-13).

Improvement in boys' participation has no doubt been driven by a variety of causes that will be explored throughout the thesis: greater inclusiveness as engendered by the establishment of a statutory National Curriculum for Music (DES, 1992); the further streamlining of GCSE music in 2000 where a more holistic, integrated approach towards the key areas of performing, composing, plus listening and appraising was instigated (QCA 2007); the increasing inclusion of popular musics in the wider curriculum and their related informal practices; and the effect of the technological revolution of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century, having dramatically altered the physical environment of the classroom whilst simultaneously challenging long-established traditions in curriculum and pedagogy.

	% of boys from total school population taking GCSE music	% of girls from total school population taking GCSE music	% of boys obtaining grade A*-C in GCSE music	% of girls obtaining grade A*-C in GCSE music
2002-3	7	8	64	71
2003-4	7	8	64	73
2004-5	8	8	67	74
2005-6	9	8	69	75
2006-7	9	8	70	76
2007-8	9	8	71	77
2008-9	9	8	73	79
2009-10	7	7	75	81
2010-11	7	7	75	80
2011-12	7	7	76	80
2012-13	6	7	74	79

**Table 2: Showing gender breakdown of GCSE Music results 2003-2013  
(totals are rounded up/down to nearest 0.5%)**

Nevertheless, despite a slight increase in those taking GCSE music since the turn of the century, it remains a minority subject after the age of 14 (Ofsted, 2012). Indeed GCSE numbers have begun to recede since 2009-10, most likely due to the introduction into many schools of a vocational award, the BTEC (Business and Technology Education Council) in Music, which has GCSE parity. BTEC ‘Firsts’<sup>4</sup> have provided candidates with broader opportunities to follow various paths of interest, be they technological, performance-driven or based upon individuals’ global musical interests; consequently their appeal to pupils and teaching staff alike have been considerable. However a new generation of BTECs is currently being phased in (since January, 2013). These have a restructured content that includes some non-optional units, an element of external assessment and perhaps most importantly, a down-grading of their GCSE

<sup>4</sup> BTEC ‘Firsts’, known as BTEC Level 2 Firsts (since 2010) currently have various GCSE equivalent status; the Level 2 Certificate = 1 GCSE, the Level 2 Extended Certificate = 2 GCSEs and the Level 2 Diploma = 4 GCSEs.

equivalence values<sup>5</sup>. Consequentially, numbers pursuing these courses may continue to rise, stabilise or decline as these changes take effect.

Data concerning pupil success in BTEC is somewhat sparse since it was first examined in 2008 and results have only recently been made public (Edexcel, 2011-2013). To further complicate matters, Music and Performing Arts were combined in the academic year 2010-11 thus giving no indication of how outcomes relate to music alone. Nevertheless, more detailed information appears in the 2012 and 2013 data (as shown in Table 3) where music was not only considered as a separate entity but gender breakdowns for all level 2 categories were supplied<sup>6</sup>.

	% of boys gaining Pass		% of girls gaining Pass		% of boys gaining Merit		% of girls gaining Merit		% of boys gaining Distinction		% of girls gaining Distinction		% of boys gaining Distinction*		% of girls gaining Distinction*	
	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013	2012	2013
Level 2 Cert.	59	64	49	58	25	21	26	22	5	4	6	5	12	11	19	15
Level 2 Ext. Cert.	42	42	30	32	27	28	28	28	14	11	19	27	17	19	23	13
Level 2 Dip.	35	38	25	26	36	35	30	32	12	12	15	15	17	16	30	27
Level 2 Average	44	45	33	36	29	29	29	28	12	10	16	12	16	17	24	24

**Table 3: Showing gender breakdown of Level 2 BTEC Music results for 2011-12 & 2012-13**

Overall totals reveal that 14,720 students took the Level 2 examination in 2011-12 (of which 62% were male and 38% female), rising to 17,867 in 2012-13 (of which 61% were male and 39% female). This suggests that BTEC is far more strongly gendered in favour of males than GCSE. However, as for GCSE, girls have achieved

- <sup>5</sup> The new generation of BTEC 'Firsts' includes a First Award in Music (120 guided learning hours), a First Certificate in Music (240 guided learning hours), a First Extended Certificate in Music (360 guided learning hours) and a Diploma in Music (480 guided learning hours). All of these courses combine core, mandatory units (intended to ensure that all learners develop essential music knowledge and applied skills) alongside optional specialist units. They also include some external assessment (25%) rather than being 100% internally approved as before. However most significantly, and from 2014, all of these qualifications will be viewed as the equivalent to a single GCSE, when considered as part of schools' performance tables, regardless of their size in terms of guided learning hours.
- <sup>6</sup> Unlike for GCSE, outcomes from both schools and Further Education (FE) Colleges are combined; therefore although 6 out of 7 of *all* level 2 BTECs are currently taken in schools (BTEC Results Day, 2013), how this specifically relates to Music is unknown.

better results, especially with regards to the top two award categories. Indeed 40% were awarded Distinction or Distinction\* in 2011-12 (as opposed to 26% of boys), reducing to 36% in 2012-13 (as opposed to 27% regarding boys).

When data for both examinations are appraised simultaneously it appears that the increasing popularity of BTEC has been to the detriment of GCSE in which numbers have been dwindling over the past few years. In addition a new approach to KS3 music, as exemplified by the Musical Futures' programme (see section 4.13 for details) has the potential to affect KS4 music still further. Of the school population first involved in its longitudinal study (2008-11), 22.6% were going on to study music at KS4, whilst these percentages seemed set to rise as subsequent cohorts made their option choices (Hallam et al., 2011, D'Amore, 2013).

The powerful effect of such pedagogies, especially in their ability to initiate swift change within an area that has remained relatively static for a substantial period of time, appears undeniable. Nonetheless, despite this encouraging development, music remains a minority KS4 subject in most schools; being chosen by more boys than girls but continuing to produce higher female success rates in terms of raw examination results. It is these shifts in gendered participation, coupled with greater constancy in terms of examination results, that inspired my undertaking of this study.

### *1.12 Personal Experiences*

At this juncture, I must declare that it is personal experiences, amassed across a 25 year career in the role of HoD (Head of Department) in three mixed comprehensive secondary schools, that initially provoked exploration in this area. Regardless of the vast curriculum changes having taken place during my teaching lifetime (especially in terms of the widespread introduction of music technology and the greater validation of popular styles in the music curriculum) or the variable group identities of the many cohorts passing through, one outcome had always been the same: the majority of 11 year-old boys, who appeared reasonably keen on music upon arriving at secondary school seemed to have lost their enthusiasm, interest and motivation by the age of 14. This deteriorating pattern of engagement with music not only existed within the greater formality of my classroom since many boys, with the exception of very able performers, also became increasingly unwilling to participate in the majority of extra-curricular opportunities on offer. Nevertheless these same individuals continued to place

enormous importance on the value of music in their private lives when no longer considering school music to be of worth.

In contrast, girls of a parallel age displayed a more consistent and integrated relationship with music; working well in the subject across the statutory secondary years, participating in substantial numbers in extra-curricular activities whilst also appearing to enjoying their musical lives outside of school. The outcome of this situation was that girls were far more likely to opt for GCSE, creating on average a 4:3 girl/boy ratio (although a more extreme 4:1 imbalance occurred in one cohort). A further gender imbalance was also evident in terms of success; girls consistently out-performed boys, especially in terms of receiving the higher and more valued A\*-C grades.

Views about gender and educational music expressed in a survey by Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), provided by 78 HoDs (heads of departments) across England, certainly resonated with my experiences. Many respondents indicated that negative peer pressure about music in school was rife amongst boys, began at an early age and only those with exceptional talent or enthusiasm were able to rise above this influence. Boys were also identified as resistant to engage in activities that they perceived as feminine or 'un-macho' (such as singing and performing or listening to classical music). Nevertheless they appeared far more motivated when allowed to participate in those areas that they considered gender-appropriate; these included exploring popular genres, utilising music technology and engaging in improvisatory composition, free from the constraints of conventional music notation. Meanwhile the respondents suggested that far larger numbers of girls played orchestral instruments, were involved in singing, and both listened to and performed in more traditional styles, including classical genres.

Despite this affirmation of my perceptions, I became increasingly uncomfortable in latter years when I began to notice that the balance of my examination groups was no longer commensurate with that expressed in national data and signalling a rise in the numbers of boys opting for GCSE. I was particularly challenged since I believed myself to be providing an inclusive music education for all pupils regardless of gender, ethnicity and class. Indeed I had rejected a curriculum based on the reified Western canon of master works in favour of encouraging pupils' engagement with less elitist genres from oral-aural traditions such as popular and world musics. Similarly, I had introduced the latest technologies into the classroom in the opinion that these provided greater empowerment for those who, for various reasons, did not access the benefits provided by the 'extra' music curriculum of instrumental provision.

However there was evidently a problem since these strategies were not engaging more boys at examination level. I began to question therefore whether, despite establishing a boy-friendly curriculum (according to Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997)) predominantly based on technology and popular styles, many of my classroom practices were at odds with this. Indeed I was forced to consider whether aspects of my pedagogy were so inappropriate that they unintentionally alienated boys and if so, what were the alternative strategies being employed by those teachers who achieved very different gender balances in their KS4 groups?

I further questioned why boys, despite their greater likelihood of opting for music examinations nowadays, were not achieving equivalent results to girls. Was this discrepancy caused by mundane circumstances (such as being less well-organised in coursework submissions or preparations for final examinations) or were large-scale unseen factors at work; namely examination syllabi requirements that surreptitiously favoured girls' musical practices over boys'? Meanwhile, was the newly established BTEC in music unfairly exercising greater masculine appeal (despite females' superior results) and if so, how could any imbalance be redressed? Finally, I wondered how KS3 curricula and pedagogies might develop in response to the new demands of KS4 courses. Could new practices address the aforementioned problems concerning gendered participation or would they be counteracted by more powerful social determinants that seemed to be governing pupils' beliefs and behaviours?

Despite my concerns I note, purely anecdotally, that a common perception appears to exist nowadays, asserting that issues of gender inequality have less agency, having even become obsolete, especially in the light of boys' increased participation at examination level music. Meanwhile, although some studies continue to highlight that music remains problematic in terms of pupils' dislike of the subject, poor examination uptake, curriculum discontinuity and pedagogical issues (Lamont & Maton, 2010, Zeserson et al., 2014) there is little recognition of the part that gender may play in this. Nevertheless alternative research (Abramo, 2011, Armstrong, 2008, 2011) indicates that gender issues remains germane, whilst recent data evidence of girls' declining interest in KS4 music (DCFS/DfE, 2003-2013, Edexcel, 2012, 2013) implies that new areas of inquiry are evolving.

I suggest therefore that wide-ranging and complex issues, deeply embedded in the social world, continue to govern the relationship between gender and music; having a profound influence not only upon how teachers construct their curricula and

pedagogies but also upon how young people receive them. In particular, it is the interplay of these elements and their reconciliation within the arena of the music classroom that will be of prime consideration in this study. In essence I will question whether those historical constructs, which for centuries have defined who does what and why in music, are being swept away by a tide of new thinking, especially in the light of modern-day notions of equality, or whether they continue, both overtly and covertly, to exert themselves.

## **1.2 The Research Focus**

This study is primarily situated within a qualitative paradigm (although it contains some salient quantitative elements) and consists of an empirical investigation into the practices and beliefs of music teachers and their KS3/KS4 pupils in relation to the historical and theoretical concepts that underpin the gendering of the music curriculum and related pedagogies. The main research question is:

To what extent is it reasonable to understand curriculum content and pedagogy in secondary music education, as gendered?

For the purposes of this study, ‘curriculum’ signifies a course of study and ‘pedagogy’ the principles and methods of instruction. Meanwhile the term ‘secondary music education’ is defined by the teaching of music in the English education system during the KS3 years (age 11-14) and at examination level during KS4 (14-16). The research focuses upon mixed-sex, non-denominational and non-selective schools since such establishments have been at the heart of my personal concerns and for various reasons, which I will explore during the thesis, provide the most straight-forward situations in which to make direct comparisons. Although there may be valuable information gained from looking at music as taught in other environments this is not within the remit of such a small scale study.

The more complex notion of ‘gender’ (as opposed to sex) and its meanings will be explored in the next section (1.3) however the term is widely used throughout the thesis to suggest the more changeable aspects of an individual’s sexual identity (which may fluctuate substantially according to the arenas in which they are operating) as opposed to the fixed biological determinants that commonly label respondents as male or female, girl or boy, woman or man.

The research question further divides into two main sub-categories, in that I intend to explore:

1. How curriculum content and pedagogy are gendered by music teachers in terms of their beliefs and practices:
  - a) as demonstrated in the music classroom;
  - b) as demonstrated by the departmental extra-curricular activities on offer;
  - c) as demonstrated by departmental outcomes concerning gender balance and grade results at KS4.
  
2. How curriculum content and pedagogy are gendered by the pupils in terms of their beliefs and practices:
  - a) as demonstrated in the music classroom;
  - b) as demonstrated by their participation at departmental extra-curricular activities;
  - c) as demonstrated by departmental outcomes concerning gender balance and grade results at KS4.

As far as the gendering of curriculum content is concerned, I will make a theoretical, historical and empirical exploration of:

- The tradition of the feminised music curriculum with specific reference to the literature emanating from feminist musicology and music education studies;
- What might constitute the nature of both a feminine-gendered and masculine-gendered curriculum content in music;
- How music curricula content may perpetuate or interrupt commonly held beliefs (by both teachers and pupils) about gender and music;
- Whether it is possible to identify a relationship between the gendering of the curriculum and numbers of girls and boys opting for examination music at 14+.

In terms of the gendering of pedagogy I will make a theoretical, historical and empirical exploration of:

- Pedagogic traditions in the history of music education with specific reference to the literature emanating from feminist musicology and music education studies;
- Whether teaching styles in music have any perceivable gendered characteristics and what might constitute the characteristics of feminine-gendered and



masculine-gendered pedagogical strategies in music education;

- How different pedagogical styles may perpetuate or interrupt commonly held beliefs (by both teachers and pupils) about gender and music;
- Whether it is possible to identify a relationship between the gendering of teaching styles in music and numbers of girls and boys opting for examination music at 14+.

By using the term ‘demonstrated’ in these sub-questions, I refer to those practices utilised in the teaching and learning processes that can be observed in the classroom arena and understood by the researcher. The sub-strands will be considered both individually and via cross-referencing, since one ultimately informs the other.

At this juncture it is important to recognise that the consideration of gender in isolation is problematic since it unquestionably intersects with other factors; from large-scale social groupings (such as ethnicity or class) to small-scale influences (such as family and peer group) and from aspects of individual identity (such as personal inclination) to external issues (such as economic climates and employment opportunities). Despite this, the study intends to focus upon the identifiable effects of gender alone upon secondary students’ engagement with school music whilst acknowledging that it remains the product of a complex interplay between the numerous socially-constructed components that comprise individual identity.

### **1.3 The Theoretical Framework**

In order to understand the dynamics that operate in our classrooms it is necessary to focus upon the powerful influence upon them of those socially-constructed beliefs and behaviours about music and gender that exist in the wider society. Indeed a strong historical framework underpins the research, since I believe it to be fundamental to the understanding of the current situation. Reference to the concepts and findings that have evolved from the growing area of feminist musicology will feature prominently (although not exclusively) throughout the thesis, since I consider them to be particularly apposite. The following section now focuses upon some key areas in this respect including the gendering of musical practices and the role of music in producing, reproducing and legitimising gendered ideologies.

### *1.31 Key Concepts*

The wider concepts surrounding social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978a, 1981) underpin this thesis; that is, the self-categorisation of individuals in terms of their membership of both the large-scale social groups to which they are automatically ascribed (e.g. ethnicity or gender) and the small-scale groups to which they choose membership, whether publicly or privately. It is also recognised that the balance between various aspects of identity fluctuate with age (Lamont, 2002); personal components (based on internal, consistent, individual characteristics) appear more salient in early childhood but give way to those with greater social impact (based on group membership) during middle childhood, into adolescence and beyond (Tarrant et al., 2001b). In effect, human beings constantly compare themselves with others throughout life, adjusting and prioritising behaviours according to various situations whilst refining them in the light of criticism from significant others (Hargreaves et al., 2002).

With specific regard to music, the intersection of these components can have diverse effects upon an individual; from determining their own participatory involvement and generic preferences to shaping their beliefs about who should do what, and why (Dibben, 2002, Lamont, 2002, O'Neill, 2002, Tarrant et al., 2002). Issues of social identity thus constantly surface throughout this study being relevant to all areas of investigation (but especially those discussed in Chapter 9, where, as part of examining the relationship between musical genres and gender, aspects of participants' musical identities outside of school are considered).

Nonetheless, and despite acknowledging that no single aspect of social identity exists in isolation, the primary focus of this study is to explore the identifiable effects of gender alone upon students' relationships with secondary school music, especially in relation to the dominant social norms that construct masculinity and femininity. These will be fully considered within the wider realms of education in Chapter 2, but in specific musical contexts across all subsequent areas of thesis.

Before gender's relationship to both music and education can be further explored however, it is necessary to discuss the complexities surrounding the term itself and in particular, how it is both distinct and indistinct from the notion of sex.

### *1.32 Defining Gender*

Prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the essentialist viewpoint had dominated thinking in this area across the Western world. With its premises originating from the theories of the Greek philosopher Plato, it argues that every functional entity (plant, animal, human or inanimate) can be broken down into primary, inalterable properties that determine its nature and thus define its 'essence' (Ritter, 1933). In biological terms this implies that the chromosomal, anatomical and hormonal characteristics of an individual, as laid down at conception, define whether they are classified as either male or female (O'Neill, 1997, Kehily, 2001, Holmes, 2007).

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, socio-biological viewpoints began to emerge which distinguished between the fixed nature of sexual features as expressed by the physical body and the more flexible possibilities of gender identity as held in the mind. In particular the 'sex-role's' socialisation theories of the 1960s and 70s, suggested that it is environmental norms that primarily govern perceptions of identity, causing the young to imitate behaviours and thus identify with male or female (Francis, 2006, Holmes, 2007, Stockard, 2007); by watching and imitating same-sex role models, children categorise themselves as being like those they observe. Meanwhile adults reinforce behaviours by rewarding gender-appropriate conduct whilst punishing that which is deemed unsuitable. Girls are thus encouraged to develop the nurturing, caring and selfless aspects of their nature, whilst the emphasis for boys is upon aggression, competitiveness and selfishness. Critics of these theories have argued that they not only construct narrow representations of children as passive and willing receivers of the role-models that they are given, but also fail to account for the human tendency to rule-break with its capacity to effect social change (Francis, 2006).

The cognitive-development theory (Kohlberg, 1966) which builds upon Piaget's stages of developmental cognition (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969) further explores the impact of the child's own awareness of, and response to, their gendered identity. It suggests that as mental capacities evolve, a child gradually develops 'schemas' or cognitive frameworks through which they organise and process information about various aspects of the world; gender awareness evolves during the toddler stage, is consolidated between the ages of five and seven, and becomes more flexible in its construction from eight years onwards. Thus children socialise themselves into becoming feminine or masculine via in-group (same sex) or out-group (other) categorisation of information.

During the latter part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Post-structuralist feminist theories, have suggested far broader conceptualisations of gender. In particular the performative view (Butler, 1990/1999), influenced by Foucault's post-structuralist ideas (1979), suggests that they are not expressive of some pre-existing reality but culturally learnt phenomena passed down to us through institutions, practices and discourses. The body thus becomes its gender '...through a series of acts which are renewed, revised and consolidated over time...' (Butler, 2006: 64). Since meanings in discourse are never fixed, gender patterns continually change as new situations challenge established ideas about femininity and masculinity, displacing previous ones. Butler (1990) further insists that the terms 'sex' and 'gender' are products of assorted scientific discourses that either have, or continue to serve various political and social interests. Consequently there is no need to differentiate between their conceptual meanings (where tradition regards sex as synonymous with an individual's biological make-up but gender as their preferred sexual presentation to the outside world) since one is as socially constructed as the other; mediated by the political and cultural norms of the society in which they exist.

Despite the importance of these theories in their ability to encourage new ways of thinking about the body's symbolism, they are perhaps somewhat unrealistic regarding everyday life; indeed I suggest that very few people consider themselves able to perform and re-perform acts of gender at will, completely free from the external and internal constraints of the wider society in which they live. If individuals are characterised by the bodies in which they reside then it seems an inescapable fact that they can never fully evade the consequences of their physical attributes and related functions, let alone the socially-constructed meanings that are also attached to them. It appears that the distinction between gender and sex must inevitably be retained therefore, since the conflation of the two remains problematic (Francis, 2002, 2006, Paechter, 2006a, 2012).

Modern-day social constructionist approaches also stress that individuals are not merely the recipients of socialisation but have agency to affect their own lives and those of others too. Identity is shaped by the effects of numerous small- and large-scale interactions, contradictions and changes within both the overall population and social sub-groups in which individuals operate. Thus becoming male or female is a learnt social process, something that we gradually do rather than are (O'Neill, 2002). Neither are masculinities and femininities 'unitary phenomena' (Paechter, 2007: 22) since there is no singular male or female role in any given society or related sub-strata; multiple

patterns exist, created by gender's intersection with a variety of other constructs (such as class or ethnicity). Ideas concerning what might constitute femininity and masculinity constantly fluctuate in different settings as established meanings meet with, and are challenged by, emerging notions; an individual's gender identity is thus fluid and able to transform across time, place and situation.

### *1.33 Patriarchy and Musical Production*

When sex and gender are considered as constructs within a patriarchal or male-dominated society, further issues arise. Patriarchy allows men to have more overall power (whether economically, physically or discursively) in terms of constructing truths and consequentially that which is deemed masculine becomes highly desirable whereas that which is perceived as un-masculine assumes far less value. A male ascendancy or hegemony is thus imposed throughout all structures of society, including the processes of cultural production (Shepherd, 1987, Connell, 1995, 2000). Since hegemony aligns masculinity with heterosexuality it not only rejects anything perceived as effeminate but represses the notion of homosexuality having played its part in the history of artistic production, despite plenty of evidence to the contrary<sup>7</sup>.

The association of the male with the mind (stressing his innate ability for controlled intellectual creation) and the female with the body (and her involvement with the uncontrolled, physical act of procreation) is thus critical in the consideration of artistic production in a patriarchal society (McClary, 1991). In relation to music, Citron (1993) encapsulates this idea by suggesting that men are regarded as able to produce and conceive ideas in their heads whilst women reproduce and conceive beings within their bodies. Koza (1994) expresses the construction of this binary relationship slightly differently but with similar intent; aligning the male with the rational, and thus able to construct culture through his manipulation of the discerning mind, and the female with the emotional, constructing nature through her physical sensitivity. Since culture evolves from the mental realms (unlike nature which is not mediated by the intellect) both it, and its male creators, assume superior roles in society. In reality the outcome of this 'culture-versus-nature' hierarchy has been to discourage women's participation in many aspects of art and to denigrate their art products as inferior to those of men.

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<sup>7</sup> For discussion concerning homosexuality and effeminacy in and music see, amongst others: McClary (1991), Bowers & Tick (1993), Citron (1993), Solie (1993), Walser (1993), Brett et al. (1994), Gill (1995), Joyce (1997), Brett & Wood (2002), Harrison (2009), Lewis (2009), Taylor (2012).

### *1.34 A Historical Perspective of Gendered Musical Practices in Private and Public*

Throughout the centuries women have received little acknowledgement of their contributions regarding the musical canon of the Western world (Battersby, 1989, McClary, 1991, Citron 1993, Post 1994, Green 1997). They are generally absent from historical accounts of classical music, despite the involvement of a substantial minority, whilst for the majority, music-making has been confined to the private and domestic worlds. In a society in which women's economic and social status has always been subservient to that of men's it is perhaps hardly surprising that the situation has remained thus.

Green (1997: 15) states that we are better assisted in our understanding of this matter if we examine women's musical practices in the light of a largely male, public or paid, sphere of engagement with music and a predominantly female, private or unpaid, domain; although the division between the two has never been absolute, the situation has prevailed and continues to do so, having a profound effect upon how gendered musical practices are both perceived and received by men and women alike. Her argument, that men have a much stronger connection with receiving remuneration for their musical involvement (especially as composers and conductors) remains germane, although this is perhaps less evident in the world of musical performing where, for example, amateur male-voice choirs exist alongside highly-paid female vocalists. However, with the exception of certain modes of public performance (which will be fully explored in Chapter 6) women have dominated the non-paid aspects of musical life, including learning music as a pastime rather than as a career possibility and for the purpose of educating others (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Green, 1997).

A historic effect of this situation has been the association of educational music with the feminine. In turn this appears to have had a detrimental effect upon many boys' participation who have consequently labelled the subject as trivial and lacking usefulness, especially if unlikely to lead to gainful employment (Crowther & Durkin, 1982, Wright, 2001). An emphasis upon the classical canon, the study of formal notation and singing (especially through choral participation) as part of the traditional curriculum (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997)) have further contributed to this alienation with many fearing homosexual taunts from their peers unless, through demonstrating outstanding musical ability, they have been able to transcend such issues (Green, 1997, Harrison, 2007, 2009).

The greater likelihood of boys taking music at examination level nowadays somewhat contradicts this positioning however and suggests that changes have occurred of late. Since it is the spheres of composition and technology that have exerted enormous influence upon music educational practice in the last twenty-five years (despite their almost total absence in previous decades) it appears that we must turn to the history of males' involvement with these procedures in order to assist our understanding of the current situation.

Feminist musicology reminds us that men's ownership of these acts has been powerful in Western (and other) cultures across many centuries whilst women's participation has the ability to threaten and challenge traditional perceptions of femininity in music, thus interrupting established patriarchal conceptions. Indeed, 'the idea of a woman mentally manipulating or controlling music is incommensurable and unacceptable, because women cannot be understood to retain their dependant, bodily femininity at the same time as producing a cerebral and potentially autonomous work of genius' (Green, 1997: 113). Women have thus been actively discouraged from, and indeed ridiculed for, engaging in the compositional process with many of their works having been denigrated for being 'too feminine' in character (either over-sensitive or lacking the required cerebral creativity) and at the very best, patronisingly tolerated by their audiences<sup>8</sup>.

It appears that the many musical practices currently existing in the wider public sphere, and originating from the highly-gendered traditions of past centuries, cannot now be cast aside as irrelevant due to a few decades of revisionist thought regarding how gender should operate in relation to music; indeed I contend that these socially constructed beliefs and behaviours continue to impact upon all musical interactions today, the music classroom not withstanding. The next chapter will narrow the focus to review what is known about gender in relation to schooling, both in terms of the general curriculum as well as that specifically concerning the subject of music.

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<sup>8</sup> For further discussion on the history of women and composing see amongst others: Bowers & Tick (1986), Leppert & McClary (1987), McClary (1991), Pendle (1991b), Citron (1993, 1994) Cook & Tsou (1994), Sadie & Samuel (1994), Green (1997), O'Brien (2002) and Briscoe (2004).

## **Chapter 2: Gender and Schooling**

This chapter examines the central issues concerning how gender operates within the whole school environment, drawing upon elements from both historical and recent debate in order to disclose the current state of affairs. Since the literature referenced derives from a vast body of work, citations have been limited to those considered as key contributions to the field of gender and education within the specific setting of primary and secondary schools. As formerly stated in Chapter 1 (section 1.2), problems concerning the de-contextualisation of gender, especially its conceptual isolation from other social factors, are constantly acknowledged and permeate much of the discussion.

### **2.1 Key Considerations**

This section investigates four areas that commonly inform debate: the performance of masculinities and femininities in schools; the effect of hegemony upon gendered performances in schools; the feminisation of schooling; and the gendering of curriculum subjects.

#### *2.11 Performances of Masculinities and Femininities in Schools*

If, as is commonly argued, the mind-body split underpins constructions of gender across the wider realms of society (see section 1.32) then inevitably this will be replicated in the fabrication and operation of the education system. Paechter (2006a, 2007) suggests that schools generally promote a veneer of gender equity (in that boys and girls appear to be perceived and treated as sexually neutral) whilst simultaneously, they actively contribute towards pupils' constructions of gender. In particular she notes that it is curricula content and pedagogical practices, both driven by powerfully gendered traditions, that profoundly affect pupils' beliefs and behaviours in this regard (see section 2.14 for more details). As a consequence, boys and girls are seen to have 'different interests and abilities, different temperaments and different learning styles, different patterns of emotional development, and thus different needs in the classroom' (Paechter, 2006a: 129).

Inevitably this situation results in the establishment of gendered norms that reside within conventional, oppositional boundaries; reinforcing mainstream society's



location of obedience and diligence with the feminine, and rebellion and hedonism with the masculine (Francis, 2006, Iverson & Murphy, 2006), notions that are further explored in sections 2.2 and 2.3. This perpetuation of stereotypes mitigates against greater recognition of the range of masculinities and femininities that currently exist in the wider world (such as the ‘feminine male’ or the ‘masculine female’ (Halberstam, 1998, Dillabough et al., 2006, Frances, 2010, Paechter, 2006c, 2012)) whilst mostly neglecting the interests and needs of those exhibiting such identities within the classroom. With direct regard to this matter, gender-appropriateness and inappropriateness in music (and especially students’ willingness and ability to cross conventional boundaries) are thoroughly examined throughout this thesis.

### *2.12 The Effect of Hegemony upon Gendered Performances in Schools*

Connell (1989, 1995, 2000) suggests that although masculinity can be expressed via a diverse range of behavioural patterns, these are ordered hierarchically. The dominant forms claim the highest status, exert the most authority, achieve the greatest respect and become normalised. In mainstream British society the commanding modes are traditionally ‘macho’; characterised by the championing of power and aggression (particularly via muscular physicality, technical competence and misogyny (Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2012)) and heterosexuality (with its frequently accompanying issues of homophobia (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003)).

This ideology also permeates the social and discursive practices played out in the staffroom, classroom and playground (Mac an Ghail, 1994, Epstein, 1997, 1998, Epstein et al., 1998, Paechter, 2012) resulting in anything that is ‘other’, according to the rules of normative heterosexuality, being categorised as inferior and referred to as ‘gay’. This word is commonly applied to anything perceived as feminine and to males who display non-macho behaviours (Epstein, 1998), regardless of their sexual orientation. Consequently, schools can be challenging environments for those who do not conform to conventional gendered ideals and who, either implicitly or explicitly, object to the dominance of hegemonic masculinity within their institutions (Coffey & Delamont, 2000). This study explores these issues in a musical context by asking participants to pinpoint those activities and genres perceived as ‘gay’ whilst also identifying reasons for their categorisation as such (see sections 6.5 and 10.4 in particular).

### *2.13 The Feminisation of Schooling*

Across the centuries, females have tended to enculturate infants into the shared practices and values of their communities in this country (Miller, 1992, 1996). With the advent of elementary state education in England (1870), this naturalistic assumption prevailed and thus women became the dominant providers of learning for children aged 12 years and under. However secondary education, deemed necessary only for middle- and upper-class young men, was highly masculine-orientated both in terms of curriculum content and staffing (Paechter, 2000, 2003, 2009). These traditions still endure to some extent; more than 90% of current primary teachers are female although secondary education is no longer principally provided by men since women represent around 60% of the workforce (DfE, 2013).

The secondary curriculum first emerged during the ‘Age of Enlightenment’ (in the 18<sup>th</sup> century) an era in which the superiority of the abstract mind took precedence over the emotional and physical body (Paechter, 2009). Thus its focus was upon the importance and supremacy of those subjects that celebrated the cerebral, with their masculine overtones, as opposed to those that emphasised the bodily, with their feminine connotations (see section 2.14 for further details). Nevertheless, despite subsequent curricula models having been founded upon these same doctrines, a populist argument has emerged in the past 20 years suggesting that an over-feminisation of schooling has occurred which has had a particularly detrimental effect upon boys (Coffey & Delamont, 2000, Martino & Kehler, 2006) .

This ‘poor boys’ discourse stresses that male egos have been destroyed by female dominance of both the staffing and systems that operate within schools, especially at primary, but also secondary, level. This has resulted in boys becoming fragile, anxious, vulnerable and lacking in self-esteem (Epstein et al., 1998, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Francis, 2006). It also contends that a dearth of suitable male role-models in the classroom has been a principal cause of boys’ decline and that this can only be remedied through the employment of more men across the profession (Martino & Kehler, 2006, Keddie & Mills, 2007, Lingard et al., 2009), a theory that is further examined in section 2.5.

This notion appears somewhat ironic however when considered in the light of alternative evidence: firstly, that boys tend to express higher levels of confidence and self-esteem in school (Walkerdine et al., 2001, Skelton, 2010) and as supported by data

emerging from interviews and observations across this study; and secondly that successive government policies since the 1990s have ‘re-masculinised’ education via an increased focus upon formal, ‘hard’ elements such as testing, assessment, performance indicators, league tables and hierarchical management (Skelton, 2002).

A similar set of assumptions has dominated both the history of music and educational music (see section 1.33) as evidenced by long-established traditions regarding both the construction and implementation of this subject’s curriculum. The impact of these factors upon current pupils’ musical engagement is thus constantly explored across this thesis, especially in Chapters 5-11 concerning those disciplines and genres that are commonly included in the mainstream music curriculum.

#### *2.14 The Gendering of the Curriculum*

Despite the numbers of women teaching at secondary level, many subjects continue to be regarded as either masculine- or feminine-orientated, their gendering being primarily founded upon curricula content and pedagogies defined in past centuries (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, Arnot et al., 1999, Coffey & Delamont, 2000, Paechter, 2009). Perhaps unsurprisingly therefore, girls and boys have consistently demonstrated different interests and preferences in school. At the time of the first Sex Discrimination Act (1975) girls were seen to favour humanities, art, English, music, cookery and childcare and were disinclined towards maths and the sciences (Skelton et al., 2007, Skelton & Francis, 2009). Conversely, boys’ interests were firmly rooted in subjects based upon logic and reason whilst they were more likely to shun those requiring empathy and creativity such as arts, languages and humanities (Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, Arnot et al., 1999, Paechter 2009).

This situation has mostly endured and denotes that ‘gender discourse is so subtle that behavioural differences become taken for granted and naturalised’ (Skelton et al., 2007). Indeed these variations are commonly attributed to a variety of innate differences occurring between the sexes (including biological characteristics, dissimilar cognitive styles and divergent inclinations towards pedagogical strategies) alongside the powerful effects of sex-stereotyping that these presumptions provoke (Wolpe, 1988, Francis & Skelton, 2005, Phoenix, 2009, Skelton & Francis, 2009). It thus appears that if a subject affirms a girl’s constructions of femininity, then she will be drawn to it, unlike a boy who may find that it challenges his sense of masculinity. In response to this notion,

gender affirming issues are explored across the thesis in relation to all aspects of music.

Although a greater measure of equity was established in 1988 with the introduction of a common National Curriculum for England, Wales and Northern Ireland, it appears that the dominant discourses continue to be those based upon hegemonic forms of knowledge (Coffey & Delamont, 2000). Indeed Paechter (2000, 2001, 2006b, 2009) proposes that the basic hierarchy of subjects has hardly changed since the inception of a secondary curriculum. Thus our society still accords the greatest power (in terms of influence and reward) to that knowledge perceived as masculine whilst those who participate in it, and who are very likely to be male, will also benefit from it the most.

Paechter further argues that subjects such as mathematics and science often alienate females from engaging with them since they emphasise ‘hard’ masculine attributes such as toughness, challenge and logic whilst they also excessively value rationality above empathy. Thus despite many girls’ increasing examination success in these areas nowadays, their affinity with and affection for these subjects still does not match that of boys’. For example many females describe science as their least favourite subject and the majority drop out of its various strands after the age of 16 when no longer compulsory (Francis, 2000, Francis et al., 2004, Paechter, 2009).

Although girls’ subject preferences appear to be somewhat broader nowadays (Elwood, 2010) it nonetheless appears that stereotypical inclinations prevail, including at all-girls schools where there are no male peers to potentially constrain choices (Francis et. al., 2004, Skelton & Francis, 2009). Thus most students continue to experience gender in relation to their schooling as ‘a range of social possibilities or constraints about what they can legitimately say, do, write and behave as boy or girl, as they attempt to realise the skills, know-how and practices that make up subject knowledge’ (Ivinson & Murphy, 2006: 165).

## **2.2 How Boys are Characterised in School**

If we regard the dominant attributes of males in our society as rationality, strength, aggression, competition, mind, science, activity and independence (Francis & Skelton, 2001) whilst hegemonic masculinity promotes the macho, misogynistic and heterosexual (Connell, 1995, 2000, Epstein et al., 1998) then it is hardly surprising that these criteria typically construct what it means to be male in schools. Boys mostly

police the expression of hegemonic masculinity through heterosexual behaviours and homophobic prejudices (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Skelton et al., 2007, Paechter, 2012); although many admit to feeling constrained by such practices, they also believe that conformity will ensure a lack of bullying (Epstein, et al., 2003, Lingard et al., 2009).

This peer pressure has the power to influence some individuals' academic performance (Renold, 2001, Keddie & Mills, 2007, Paechter, 2012) and examination options too (Wright, 2001, Forde et al., 2006). Those boys who display extreme macho traits tend to perceive all educational co-operation and involvement as feminine (Mac an Ghail, 1994, Jackson, 2003) except in curriculum areas in which aggressive behaviours can be deemed positive, such as in PE (Paechter, 2003). In most other subjects they adopt a range of negative strategies; procrastination, withdrawal of effort, avoidance of work and disruptive behaviour (Forde et al., 2006).

Boys who display machismo to a lesser extent are likely to perform reasonably well in masculine-orientated subjects such as Maths or Science but reject those that require feminine-perceived qualities (like sensitivity) such as music, drama and art (Colley et al., 1994, Beckett, 2001, Wright, 2001, Younger et al., 2005). In the classroom their behaviour manifests itself in 'laddishness'; the constant, sometimes aggressive, challenging of authority coupled with a laid-back attitude and apparent lack of care about school work. There are rich discussions of this phenomenon across much of the literature pertaining to how gender is performed in the classroom<sup>9</sup>.

Nonetheless, masculinities in the wider society, and likewise in schools, are constantly being reconfigured; thus the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and other forms remains highly complex (Martino & Kehler, 2006, Martino, 2008). Some boys display behaviours similar to those typically expressed by many, but certainly not all, females (since girls are not a homogeneous group either). These forms are often described as femininities (Francis, 2008) whilst those exhibiting them are frequently castigated and bullied (Dillabough et al., 2006, Skelton & Francis, 2009). Others develop more successful 'personalised' masculinities (Swain, 2006) in which a mix of feminine and masculine attributes can be observed, with those exhibiting them being neither bullied nor considered subordinate within their peer groups.

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<sup>9</sup> For key texts see, amongst others: Epstein (1997, 1998), Epstein et al. (1998, 2003), Francis (2000, 2010a), Paechter (2003, 2006, 2007, 2012), Renold (2001), Skelton (2001), Warrington et al. (2000), Frosh et al. (2002, 2003), Jackson (2003, 2006) Skelton et al. (2007) and Skelton & Francis (2009).

Nevertheless, central to these individuals' success is the possession of some ability at sport, especially football; indeed prowess in this area can completely off-set a boy's demonstration of feminised attributes such as being articulate, positive towards school work and friendly with teachers (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Paechter, 2003, Francis, 2010a). Illustrations of boys successfully negotiating the expression of their masculinity within this study will be evident in Chapter 6, regarding the dominantly masculine-orientated discipline of performing rock music (Green 1993, 1997, Jaffurs, 2004, Abramo, 2011, Hallam et al., 2011) and Chapter 7, concerning the strongly masculine-gendered acts of composing and using technology (Green, 1993, 1997, Charles, 2004, Armstrong 2008, 2011, Legg, 2010).

Despite this, boys in general tend to be perceived by their teachers as displaying more behavioural issues, truancy and literacy problems (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et al., 2005, Martino, 2008, Lingard et al., 2009) whilst appearing immature and lacking in concentration, motivation and independent learning skills when compared to girls (Ofsted, 2003, Riddell & Tett, 2006, Keddie & Mills, DCFS, 2007). Teachers typically regard boys as dominant, demanding and difficult as well as confident, boisterous, physical, and assertive (Skelton & Francis, 2009) and pupils' perceptions strongly agree (Warrington et al., 2000, Frosh et al., 2002, 2003). Many teachers also fail to see how negatively-perceived attributes, such as challenging questioning, can be channelled into positively promoting success (Jones & Myhill, 2004). Examples of boys' poor behaviour resulting from a lack of relevant stimulation are evidenced throughout this study. Notably they tended to occur in those disciplines requiring written competencies, such as listening and appraising or using musical notation (see Chapter 8).

It appears that anxieties surrounding boys' poor behaviour and low attainment have also encouraged many educators to adopt highly structured and controlled pedagogies in order to contain the situation (Phoenix, 2009, Skelton & Francis, 2009, Francis, 2010a). Regarding music education specifically, Collins (2009) suggests that boys should: partake in tasks that accomplish quick and noticeable success; have positive parental support that confirms music as an expression of their masculinity; experience wide usage of technology, particularly as it speeds the act of composition; and receive praise from male role models.

Notably, there is no mention of the use of informal modes of learning in the encouragement boys' positive participation and as identified by recent research (Green, 2002a, 2006, 2008, Abramo, 2011, Hallam et al., 2008, 2011). I would also contend that

the aforementioned procedures are equally appropriate for encouraging and improving girls' engagement too. Indeed, wider pedagogical research suggests that it is dangerous to imply that different learning styles have gendered dimensions; little empirical evidence exists to show that boys' dominant learning styles differ from girls'; successful teaching strategies are thus significant for *all* pupils in *all* types of schools (Younger et al., 2005, Phoenix, 2009).

### **2.3 How Girls are Characterised in School**

If, according to traditional thinking in our society, the dominant attributes of females are emotion, frailty, care, cooperation, the body, nature, arts, passivity and dependence (Francis & Skelton, 2001) then it seems unsurprising that many girls believe that they should be considerate and well-behaved in school (Francis et al., 2010, 2012, Ringrose, 2013). Teachers tend to describe girls as co-operative, conscientious and easier to teach (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007) but conversely as conformist plodders (Skelton & Francis, 2009). Pupils of both sex agree that girls generally put greater effort into their work, appear interested in learning and are more self-motivated, conscientious and organised (Warrington et al., 2000). Examples of both teachers and pupils attributing similar qualities to girls appear throughout this study (especially in Chapter 5): positive associations being awarded particularly for their participation in classical performance, using notation and listening and appraising; and negative apropos their involvement in popular genres, composing and manipulating technology (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, Charles, 2004, Armstrong 2008, 2011, Hallam et al., 2011).

Although it may also appear that girls are accomplishing superior academic outcomes nowadays (see section 2.4) this success is not universal; social class, and to a lesser extent ethnicity, remain primary predictors (as with boys) whilst female advancements continue to be confined to certain curriculum areas and at certain Key Stages (Walkerdine et al., 2001, Jackson, 2006, Warrington & Younger, 2006, Francis, 2010b, Skelton et al., 2010). Meanwhile within the classroom arena, girls (like boys) are defined by oppositional extremes according to whether they transgress or accommodate that which is regarded as normative femininity. Transgressive girls must rule-break by showing disinterest in academia whilst also exhibiting 'laddette' behaviours (Jackson, 2006) although the primary determinant of a girl's popularity still remains centred upon her physical attractiveness (Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003).

Paechter suggests that a range of subordinate femininities, like masculinities, present in the classroom but these are affected by ‘shifting and interrelated internal and external influences’ (2006d: 367) particularly according to age. For example, the ‘tomboy’ can be a fairly successful mode of identity in childhood but becomes less attractive post-adolescence when dominant conceptions of femininity (such as being nice, pretty and passive) become more pressing. This study likewise focuses upon changes across age-range regarding acceptable musical practices (for both sexes) by analysing participants’ viewpoints concerning both past and present preferences.

Despite the dominance of traditional modes of feminine behaviour in secondary schools, some girls also feel compelled to emulate hegemonic masculinity (Ringrose & Renold, 2009, Paechter, 2012). This behaviour is often expressed by able students who feel the need to adopt masculine attributes such as assertiveness, self-reliance and self-sufficiency in order to ensure academic success. Nevertheless they often struggle to balance this strategy against expressions of normative femininity, such as by displaying knowledge of fashion, pop music and celebrities (Ringrose, 2007, Francis et al., 2009, Francis, 2010b, Skelton, 2010, Skelton et al., 2010). Like high-ability boys, those who successfully negotiate this path frequently off-set their achievements by engaging in minor misbehaviours, playing down strengths, emphasising heterosexuality and encouraging friendships with less able peers (Paechter, 2007, Francis et al., 2009, Francis, 2010b, Skelton, 2010, Skelton et al., 2010). Paechter suggests that such imitations of male behaviours do not lead to equality within the classroom however (2012); femininities are negations of masculinity therefore they can never construct a credible challenge to patriarchal power.

Despite their apparent academic success nowadays, Skelton (2010) also indicates that many girls express less confidence in their competencies and are more self-critical. She notes that boys (even those who display poorer standards of behaviour) say that they have better relationships with teachers whereas girls are more likely to regard tutors as authority figures and distance themselves accordingly. Girls’ success is also seen by many teachers as the result of hard work rather than a product of their untapped potential (Phoenix, 2009), a theme that will be thoroughly investigated in Chapter 4 focusing upon pupils’ commonly perceived attributes in relation to their musical interests and skills.



## 2.4 The Educational Achievement Gap

In the 1990s, concerns about ‘failing’ boys, whose educational standards were seen to be far weaker than those of girls (Epstein, et al., 1998, Martino & Kehler, 2006), created an oppositional discourse that pitched *all* boys’ underachievement against *all* girls’ success (Skelton et al., 2007). This over-simplification of the situation meant that there was little acknowledgement of research indicating that the least difference in gendered attainment occurred between pupils of the highest socio-economic backgrounds and the most between those of the lowest (Foster et al., 2001). Nevertheless for many teachers, low achievement was, and still remains, about boys since they regard girls’ poor attainment as a matter of inadequate confidence rather than disaffection with learning (Skelton, 2010).

Generalisations about boys’ inferior educational performance also ignore the fact that a strong ‘macho’ peer culture might negatively affect the attitudes of some towards school but certainly not all; many continue to achieve enormous educational success (Younger et al., 2005, Keddie & Mills, 2007, Martino, 2008, Lingard et al., 2009). In addition it is difficult to sustain the argument that a boy’s poor achievement jeopardises his future when one considers men’s greater overall success and financial reward within the labour market (Arnot et al., 1999, Skelton et al., 2007).

Nonetheless, evidence concerning KS4/5 examination outcomes shows that girls, collectively, accomplish greater academic success; slightly more enter for GCSEs and ‘A’ levels whilst on average they amass higher numbers of passes and at better grades (Elwood, 2010). However closer scrutiny of a wide range of sources, as reviewed by Skelton et al., (2007) and involving the analysis of all available public data concerning pupils across KS1-KS4 in England, concludes that a more nuanced picture is required. They noticed that girls did not out-perform boys across the board at the close of primary schooling, there being no difference in science and maths outcomes but a 10 percentage point differential in literacy (an international problem according to the authors). Meanwhile at KS4, girls did particularly well in English but roughly the same as boys in maths and science. Most importantly, levels of achievement between boys and girls varied within particular ethnic sub-groups whilst social class was once again a major factor since *all* pupils from lower socio-economic groups did poorly.

Girls have certainly achieved superior results in both GCSE and BTEC music since their inception (see Tables 1, 2 and 3) and therefore this study explores a range of

potential contributory factors in Chapter 11; from investigating how a feminine-gendered, traditional curriculum may have influenced the construction and content of music examinations to the sorts of behaviours that girls may instigate, both in and out of the classroom, in order to maximise success at KS4.

## **2.5 Teachers, Gender and the Classroom**

Ivinson and Murphy note that in order to fully appreciate the role that they play in students' schooling, educators need to understand 'how gender as hegemonic social representations, mediates learning' (2006: 177). Their classroom investigations revealed that teachers of both sexes projected common representations of gender onto their pupils but regarding boys, there were significant variations according to perceptions of individuals' ability. In effect the overarching patriarchal link between masculinity with the mind, rationality and intellect caused teachers to grant greater autonomy to high-achieving boys, often as a reaction to their perceived attributes rather than the actual content of their work. Similarly low-achieving boys, who like girls, tend to be associated more with the body, were controlled in physical ways including limiting their seating options and movement around the room.

Further research across various empirical settings suggests that the average classroom remains highly gendered in both its organisation and the practices exhibited therein (Renold, 2006, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007). Teachers, often inadvertently, perpetuate and encourage stereotypical modes of behaviour, often giving boys greater autonomy and permission to play whilst also asking them more challenging questions and allowing greater response times (Renold, 2006). The diary reports of lesson observations appearing across this thesis, will shed further light upon these issues in the music classroom; in particular whether teachers (either purposely or unintentionally) award different levels of autonomy across various disciplines according to gender.

The notion that teaching is a 'soft' option for males has the potential to create further problems in school. This seems to encourage some men (both at primary but particularly secondary level) to affirm their sense of masculinity by aligning themselves with the dominant boys and acting as 'one of the lads' (Francis & Skelton, 2001, Skelton, 2001, Lingard et al., 2009). Francis & Skelton's study (2001) across a selection of secondary schools confirmed that many male teachers utilised the discourses surrounding compulsory heterosexuality in order to construct their gendered identity;

consequently a sexist, misogynistic and homophobic atmosphere prevailed. This rhetoric was not only used against girls but also those boys who did not fit the narrow perceptions of masculinity sanctioned within such arenas.

Although I contend that it is less feasible that such behaviours are overtly expressed nowadays (due to a greater acceptance of other sexualities in general society alongside the institution of anti-discriminatory laws), it is also unlikely that they have been entirely swept away. Therefore throughout this study, I explore these concerns across all musical engagement but with particular reference to composing and technological usage, both identified as highly masculine-gendered domains (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, Armstrong, 2008, 2011).

### *2.51 The Effect of Teacher Gender upon Pupil Attainment*

A further consideration involves the potential relationship between a teacher's sex and its power to affect students' attainment, progress and behaviour; in particular the populist notion that boys' educational deterioration has been fuelled by the decline in numbers of men entering the profession (Martino & Kehler, 2006). This not only presumes that males behave differently to females but also that boys who observe men demonstrating gender-appropriate tasks, will automatically absorb and emulate these behaviours. Critics of this approach stress that such notions are founded upon outmoded sex-role theories; boys are not homogeneous groups and therefore it should not be assumed that they will automatically identify with, and copy, their mentors (Carrington et al., 2007, Francis et al., 2008, Skelton & Francis, 2009, Lingard et al., 2009).

A large-scale study across 413 English schools and involving 9000, 11 year-old pupils provides compelling evidence that the positive effect of sex-roles remains unsubstantiated (Carrington et al., 2007, Francis, 2008, Francis et al., 2008); indeed outcomes suggested that pupils' attainment remained unaffected by their experience of same- or different-sex teachers. Although slightly more students, both male and female, were more positive about school if they were taught by a woman, two-thirds believed that the sex of their teacher made no difference to their learning or classroom experiences whilst the quarter who said that it did proffered diverse reasons. In essence it was the perceived effectiveness of teachers, regarding both their pedagogical and personal skills, that was most important to pupils.

Regarding the small amount of research in this area relating to music, one

investigation has revealed that *both* sexes preferred interaction with a female teacher since music lessons were felt to be ‘more varied, more relaxed, and more discussion-orientated’ whilst also containing ‘less dissension, less anxiety and more experiential learning’ (Button, 2006: 424). Another study notes that girls admitted to liking their music teachers more than boys *regardless* of their actual sex (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001) and possibly suggesting that historical perceptions of music as a feminine-gendered subject are pertinent here.

A further issue regarding sex-role modelling concerns those forms of masculinity that should be conveyed as acceptable since these are never articulated in educational policy (Francis & Skelton, 2005, Francis, 2008). Case studies of three male teacher-respondents (drawn from the aforementioned larger project (Francis, 2008)), revealed diverse pedagogic practices, disciplinary procedures, and teacher-pupil relationships in action. Meanwhile aspects of not only traditional but non-conventional elements of both masculinity and femininity were evident across the beliefs and behaviours expressed by all three, once again emphasising the fluidity and inconstancy of gendered constructions. It thus appears that a focus upon biological sex matching is better replaced by an investigation of how gender is performed by teachers and in particular, its effect upon the learning environment for boys and girls. It is for this reason that this thesis focuses primarily upon the gendering of individuals’ curriculum and pedagogy whilst conversely, not under-estimating the variable impact that gendered experiences, perspectives and perceptions may have upon their practices.

In conclusion, it appears vital for educators to recognise that they, ‘bring the cultural legacy of their subjects into the present’ (Ivinson & Murphy, 2007: 175) having the power to reproduce, reinforce or transform them. Since the subject of school music has a history of feminisation, the effect of this upon its current status amongst pupils will be thoroughly explored across the following chapters whilst the impact of both its changing nature (especially in terms of a technical re-orientation) and current relationship to traditional gendered practices, will also be fully evaluated.

## **2.6 Refining the Focus: Music, Education and Gender**

The importance to this study of literature concerning broader issues of gender and education is undeniable but in order to elucidate specific subject matters it is now pertinent to narrow the field to that concerning music and music education. The

following section will briefly contextualise the main concepts and theories pertaining to these areas; these will be further scrutinised and critiqued throughout ensuing chapters as each major strand of the current curriculum and its related pedagogies are explored in relation to findings emerging from this study.

### *2.61 A Brief Overview of Research in Music, Education and Gender*

Since music was deemed feminine-gendered throughout much of the 20th century (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997), this may help to explain the school subject's long-standing lowly status, especially at KS4, whilst also accounting for girls' superior examination success (Joint Council for the GCSE 1988-1993, DFE/DfEE/DCFS/DfE, 1993-2013, Edexcel, 2011-13). In particular the persistent emphasis (until fairly recently) upon elite performance as defining the ultimate essence of musicality (especially in the classical sphere) and its ability to favour girls' practices, is of prime consideration (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001).

Conversely, the greater acceptance, inclusion and recognition of those instruments relating to popular musics, alongside their potential to disrupt established trends in performing, are apposite (Jaffurs, 2004, Burton, 2010, Shervington, 2010, Hallam et al., 2011, Zeserson et al., 2014). Indeed there is a wealth of research indicating that gendered musical preferences operate from an early age and continue to affect choices across the school years and in to adult life<sup>10</sup>; thus mapping patterns of engagement are key in assisting our understanding of the wider implications of boys' and girls' current practices. It should be note however that despite its abundance, much of this data is quantitative and thus deterministic in nature; it confirms that strongly gendered patterns of choice continue to operate across time but fails to explore the complex reasons that lay behind these.

Green's findings concerning teachers' and pupils' perceptions of gender are mostly qualitative and suggest that respondents' views replicate gendered ideologies, discourses and practices that have strong historical precedents (1993, 1996/2010, 1997). With this consideration in mind I will thus explore whether boys, as in her study, continue to maintain preferences for technology, engaging in popular styles, and

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<sup>10</sup> See Abeles & Porter (1978), Bruce & Kemp (1993), Griswold & Chrobak (1981), Crowther & Durkin (1982), Delzell & Leppa (1992), Fortney et al. (1993), Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997, 2002a), Koza (1994), Post (1994), Zervoudakes & Tanur (1994), O'Neill & Boulton (1995, 1996), O'Neill (1997), Zillmann & Gan (1997), Harrison & O'Neill (2000), Hallam & Prince (2000), Lamont (2002), O'Neill et al. (2001), Hallam et al. (2008), Abeles, (2009), Hallam et al. (2011).

participating in unstructured, less target-driven musical tasks; and girls in the performance of gentler musics, through singing or playing gender-appropriate instruments.

In relation to this I will also examine whether historical notions concerning girls' commonly-perceived attributes (such as co-operation, conformity and sensitivity) and confirmed in Green's survey (1993), continue to exert their influence in music education. These permit girls to be regarded as more active and successful than boys in musical performance but less so in composing and using technology where traditional masculine attributes (spontaneity, innovation and autonomy) are perceived as essential in attaining success. I will likewise question whether the dominantly masculine delineations of these activities, which caused teachers in Green's study to regard boys as not only more successful in this respect but in *all* aspects of the music curriculum, exert their influence in today's evolving educational environment<sup>11</sup>.

Comparing my findings with those emerging from a variety of more recent studies regarding gender and music education (Charles, 2004, Legg, 2010, Armstrong, 2008, 2011) are also key to the identification of current trends. Meanwhile the implications of using informal pedagogies, as exemplified in the practices associated with the creation of popular musics and the use of technology and its related conventions (Green, 2002a, 2006, 2008, Abramo, 2011, Armstrong, 2008, 2011, Hallam et al., 2008, 2011, D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014), will assist in determining whether former patterns of gendered participation are being maintained or eroded.

## *2.62 A Conceptual Framework for the Gendering of Curriculum and Pedagogy*

Since this study possesses strong historical and comparative perspectives as drawn from existing literature in the field, it also intends to extend the theoretical paradigm by considering whether various aspects of curriculum and pedagogy can be defined as either 'feminine-gendered' (more likely, although not exclusively, to be of greater appeal to girls) or 'masculine-gendered' (more likely, although not restrictively, attractive to boys). In relation to musical activities and genres, I use the term feminine-gendered to suggest those beliefs and behaviours commonly perceived as more

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<sup>11</sup> I use the term delineate in the sense that Green (1988) uses it in her explanation of musical meaning i.e. that music metaphorically sketches a variety of non-musical, symbolic connections that inform our understanding (either consciously or sub-consciously) and consequently can provoke both positive and negative reactions, or a mixture of both. This theory notion is fully explored in section 6.11.

appropriate for females to adopt (according to Western patriarchal thinking) and masculine-gendered for those considered more appropriate for males.

I fully acknowledge that these norms are not applicable to all individuals since, as emphasised throughout this chapter, there are multiple constructs of masculinity and femininity in existence that demand and express very different wants and needs. However since the dominant forms in the Western world, and as discussed in section 2.12, are macho and assert power, aggression, technical competence and heterosexuality (Connell, 1995, 2000, Mac an Ghail, 1996), this may explain why many boys prefer to participate in those musical genres (such as rap, hardcore dance music or metal) and activities (manipulating technology, improvising and playing loud instruments requiring physical strength) that reflect these precedents.

Since popular notions of femininity are commonly presented in opposition to those of masculinity, and in defiance of their broadening possibilities in the wider world, girls in school mostly remain defined by passivity, nurturing and softness. Thus many find themselves positively affirmed via more benign modes of musical performance, such as ballad-like singing, accompanied by gentle-sounding instruments; a phenomenon possessing historical precedents throughout the history of music in the West and most other parts of the world too (see sections 1.33 and 1.34).

It is necessary to reiterate that not all boys and girls adhere to these stereotypes whilst others may reveal different musical identities in school to those that they hold privately and in their lives outside of school. Nevertheless norms resulting from both past and present expectations concerning gender-appropriateness, naturally surface in the music classroom. Meanwhile those individuals who openly challenge these may find boundary breaking problematic (a notion that is also examined throughout the thesis).

With these issues in mind I have developed a framework to assist in the interpretation of data emerging from this study. This consists of a list of descriptive criteria that I believe to encapsulate the potential extremes of feminine- and masculine-gendered music curricula and pedagogies, as commonly represented in the body of literature relating to the field of gender and music education. Each pair of oppositional statements (one signifying feminine- and the other masculine-gendering) is accompanied by references to key works that suggest the categorisations and/or contain evidence that they exist as significant ideological assumptions or practices.

At this point it is important to note several points concerning the construction of the framework. Firstly it was developed *before* data collection began, but was then

deliberately ignored during periods of fieldwork, since constant reference to its content might have unintentionally narrowed my focus and likewise inhibited data flow. Its criteria were then considered retrospectively, during analytical stages of the research (see Chapter 3 for further details).

Secondly, the framework per se appears to be a fairly unsophisticated tool by which to make judgements since the polar opposites expressed in each pair of criteria are intentionally formulated as abstractions that can only be crudely mapped onto situational realities. Indeed it is quite improbable that any music department would consistently conform to all criteria pertaining to either extreme, but instead may display aspects deriving from both strands. Nevertheless I believe that by using the framework as a point of reference during data analysis, the emerging themes, conundrums and anomalies were more easily perceived, contemplated upon and analysed.

Finally, and throughout the thesis, the framework has illuminated my understanding of the major findings emerging from the existing literature in this field; enabling me to ascertain to what extent those findings were or were not reflected in my own. (For the framework itself see Table 4 on the following page.)

### *2.63 Femininities, Masculinities and the Participants in this Study*

Although this study recognises that a range of masculinities and femininities exist amongst the respondents, they are identified conventionally (as man or woman, male or female, boy or girl). Not only were these labels consistently used in the educational establishments in which the research took place but contributors also identified themselves likewise. In addition, and as confirmed in section 2.51, the impact of the sex of teacher-participants upon the musical responsiveness of their pupils will not be a key consideration in the study. Indeed, deeper analysis of the quantitative data did not lead me to believe that there were markedly different outcomes regarding the responses from men and women about aspects of their curriculum and pedagogy (see **Appendix D**).

I propose that the sex of the teacher does not necessarily determine the gendering of their curriculum and pedagogy therefore whilst also acknowledging that gendered experiences cannot help but shape beliefs and behaviours to varying extents. Nevertheless I contend that individuals possess the power to renounce the effect of their backgrounds upon their current thinking and behaviours resulting in the possibility that a female teacher can exhibit a dominantly masculine-gendered approach and vice versa.



<b>Feminine-Gendered</b>	<b>Masculine-Gendered</b>	<b>Key References Pertaining to the Field of Music Education and Gender</b>
Predominance of instruments with traditional feminine associations such as voice, string and woodwind).	Predominance of instruments with traditional masculine associations such as guitars, drums and technology.	Abeles & Porter (1978), Bruce & Kemp (1993), Griswold & Chrobak (1981), Crowther & Durkin (1982), Delzell & Leppla (1992), Fortney et al. (1993), Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), Koza (1994), Post (1994), Zervoudakes & Tanur (1994), O'Neill & Boulton (1995, 1996), O'Neill (1997), Zillmann & Gan (1997), Hallam & Prince (2000), Harrison & O'Neill (2000), Lamont (2002), O'Neill et al. (2001), Hallam et al. (2008), Harrison (2007, 2009), Abeles (2009), Hallam et al. (2008, 2011).
Predominance of formal, teacher-led extra-curricular groups e.g. choirs, orchestras, bands etc.	Predominance of informal, pupil-led extra-curricular groups e.g. pop/rock groups, DJ-ing, computer clubs.	McClary (1991) Citron (1993, 1994), Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) Bray (2000), Lamont & Tarrant (2001), Lamont (2002), O'Neill (2002), Harrison (2009), Welch et al. (2009).
KS3 curriculum based on the study of the 'master works' from the classical canon or classic rock/pop genres.	KS3 curriculum based on the study of popular styles, especially currently developing genres.	Vulliamy (1977b), Cox (1993), Comber et al. (1993), Green (1993, 1996, 1997, 2002a, 2008), Colley et al. (1994), Dibben (2002), Colley & Comber (2003b), Colley (2008), Abramo (2011), Zeserson et al. (2014)
Emphasis upon use of formal methods of learning e.g. teacher-led performing, composing, listening & writing tasks	Emphasis upon use of informal methods of learning e.g. peer-teaching, listening and copying, improvisation.	Green (2001, 2002a, 2006, 2008), Jaffurs (2004), Lamont & Maton (2010), Armstrong (2008, 2011), Abramo (2011), Hallam et al. (2008, 2011), D'Amore (2013), Zeserson et al. (2014).
Emphasis upon developing performance skills in reproduction of the master works.	Emphasis upon developing composition skills in production of pupils' own works.	Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), Charles (2004), Legg (2010), Armstrong (2008, 2011).
Sequential delivery of information and skills, building step by step knowledge in ordered, linear progression.	Non-sequential delivery of information and skills, imparted when/as relevant in random, non-linear progression.	Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997, 2002a, 2006, 2008), Jaffurs (2004), Burton (2010), Shervington (2010), Hallam et al. (2008, 2011).
Little or limited use of technology and electronic instruments in the delivery of all areas of the curriculum.	Widespread use of technology and electronic instruments in the delivery of all areas of the curriculum.	Bayton (1988, 1998), Comber et. al. (1993a), Green (1993, 1997), Caputo (1994), Colley et al. (1997), Valentine & Holloway (2001), O'Neill et al. (2001), Pitts & Kwami (2002), Colley & Comber (2003a), Cooper & Weaver (2003), Ho (2004b, 2007), Savage (2008), Armstrong (2008, 2011).
Predominant use of conventional notation in musical learning, including notation-based software.	Limited or no use of conventional notation in musical learning and prevalence of sequence-based software.	Vulliamy (1977b), Cox (1993), Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997, 2001, 2006, 2008), Abramo (2011), Armstrong (2008, 2011).
GCSE music and/or GCSE/BTEC in Performing Arts available at KS4 with a strong performance-based focus.	BTEC in music or similar courses available at KS4 with a clear technological focus.	Crowther & Durkin (1982), Bray (2000), Pitts (2000), Wright (2001, 2002), Lamont (2002), Lamont et al. (2003), Haughton & Spruce (2007), Lamont & Maton (2008, 2010) Harrison (2009), Hallam et al. (2008, 2011), D'Amore (2013), Zeserson et al. (2014).

**Table 4: Framework of criteria regarding the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy in music.**

In essence it is the gendering of a teacher's conveyance of the subject and the perceivable effects that this has upon pupils, that is paramount to this study.

It is also important to stress that neither a feminine- nor a masculine-gendered approach is exclusive in its appeal due to the multiple constructions of gender that exist amongst pupils and consequently guide their responses. Despite this, I assert that the dominant forms, and thus most likely to exert the greatest sway, continue to be those that have evolved from long-standing traditions in music and music education in this country. This study thus attempts to strike a balance between acknowledging the range of masculinities and femininities represented by its participants whilst focusing upon the normative expectations concerning gender and school music.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology, Design and Methods**

The study consists of a mixed-methods exploration of the beliefs and behaviours expressed by music teachers and pupils from a selection of co-educational, non-selective, secondary schools. The research took place in two stages; the first comprised of a teacher survey, from which a mix of qualitative and quantitative data outcomes emerged, and the second involved a triangulation of qualitative methods, including observations and interviews. These took place in three focus music departments and produced a substantial quantity of data.

### **3.1 Methodology**

A qualitative methodology pervades much of the study, especially during the second phase where aspects of grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) were drawn upon. Although the prior formulation of a conceptual framework (Table 4) was not consistent with the premise of ‘theory deriving from the data’ (Cohen et al., 2007), its criteria were deliberately discounted during periods of intensive fieldwork in order that they did not consciously influence, and potentially restrict, my focus.

Many of the procedures utilised were consistent with grounded theory conventions however, especially regarding the application of a strategy of ‘verifying-while-you-go-along throughout the research process’ (Timmermans & Tavory, 2007: 498). Most importantly I was fully aware of the potential of my own reactivity within the field; thus resisting temptations to manipulate situations in order to extract a narrow range of responses that may have suited the research aims but could equally have closed down other valid areas of inquiry. By maintaining a wide focus I intended to remain receptive to emerging and previously unforeseen areas of consideration whilst neither rejecting, or indeed attempting to simultaneously analyse, data as it surfaced in the field (see section 3.42 for further details).

This strategy was maintained throughout the subsequent analysis process by the use of open coding (whereby data were explored through the creation of new categories and sub-categories) and axial coding (whereby their inter-connectedness was explored). A strategy of constant comparison was utilised with data being repeatedly revisited and re-evaluated across a period several years (see section 3.424).

### 3.2 First Stage of Research: Survey Design, Content, Distribution and Analysis

The use of a questionnaire as the initial research tool had two purposes: to compare the resulting outcomes with those emerging from a similar survey executed by L. Green<sup>12</sup> 16+ years earlier (Music, Gender and Education: A Report on Some Exploratory Research, 1993); and to provide a body of data from which a purposive sample could be extracted (see 3.3) and from which a deeper exploration of issues could evolve. I based my survey on the former for several reasons. Firstly, and like L. Green at the time of her study, I wished to gain a general feel for the current music classroom environment; both in terms of teachers' perceptions about pupils' involvement with school music and regarding general information about departmental resources, staffing and numbers taking examination music. Secondly, I believed that by asking the same questions to the same number of respondents, who were in similar career posts and from the same sorts of schools, it would be possible for very straightforward comparisons to be drawn. By correlating the data sets I intended to investigate whether perceptions concerning core curriculum activities (performing, composing, singing, listening/appraising and using notation), and the studying of key musical genres (classical, pop and world), had undergone any noticeable changes in the intervening years<sup>13</sup>.

Despite my belief that the main strength of adopting this approach was to promote ease of data comparison and a greater reliability in the likelihood that I was comparing like with like (as far as this can ever be possible), I was also aware of its drawbacks. For example, I was confined to asking questions by using the identical language to L. Green's, since to frame them in my own way may have distorted their meanings, producing less reliable outcomes. I also wanted to expand some areas of questioning since L. Green was not always consistent in this respect. For example she failed to quiz respondents about students' responses to jazz despite having asked about their engagement with classical, world and pop musics.

Finally I also had to acknowledge that music departments have changed

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<sup>12</sup> Due to Professor Lucy Green having the same family name and in order to avoid confusion, she will be referred to as L. Green and I will be referred to as A. Green when making direct comparisons between the data outcomes from the two surveys.

<sup>13</sup> Note that there has been one other study by Hanley (1998) using Green's questionnaire as a basis for similar data collection. Although it took place under a different educational system (that of British Columbia, Canada), its outcomes revealed many parallels with Green's findings (1993). Hanley found that most teachers believed boys and girls to be equally successful when participating and to share similar musical preferences. Nevertheless girls were seen to be considerably more capable in singing, somewhat more so in playing, listening and using notation, and more willing to engage in classical music. Conversely boys were considered to be more accomplished at composition whilst showing greater preferences towards jazz and popular musics.

enormously in the interim period between the surveys, both physically and in terms of the sorts of activities that take place within them, and therefore some of L. Green's questioning did not adequately address certain aspects of the current situation. Therefore although I did not reject any of Green's original questions for inclusion in my questionnaire, I added many others in order to breach any gaps that I perceived to exist (for further details see section 3.22).

### *3.21 Survey Design*

The strength of this questionnaire's design and purpose was deemed vital in producing enough useful and quantifiable data to assist the study into its next stage. It needed to be user-friendly, carefully worded in order to avoid ambiguous language content and, most importantly, appear as fair and unbiased as possible (Punch, 2003). It was also recognised that busy teachers were unlikely to complete a survey that did not appear quick and easy, therefore some questions (as in the 1993 survey) were posed as closed opinion options with tick box replies. Although such methods have limitations, especially in that they do not allow for answers that do not fall into pre-determined response categories (however discrete and exhaustive they might appear) they are known to be effective in encouraging individuals to respond (Cohen et al., 2007).

Like L. Green, I was not intending to look for evidence of 'empirical reality' (1993:6) but wished to explore the various and diverse aspects of respondents' consciousness as revealed in both their replies and unprompted responses. Thus many of the questions (for example concerning school identity and population or departmental staffing and activities) were used as important tools in cross-checking qualitative data (respondent's explanations and reasons) against quantitative data (the factual information). Most importantly, this allowed for the monitoring of any slippage between teachers' perceptions and the hard evidence that they had supplied.

At this juncture, issues of validity must be acknowledged. However well-designed a questionnaire, it cannot overcome the problem of the, 'reactivity of the research instrument' (Aldridge & Levine, 2002:13) whereby respondents, who wish their replies to appear socially desirable, will adapt them accordingly. There is simply no way of checking the accuracy or truthfulness of their answers and some will undoubtedly play up their good practices (whilst ignoring any failings) or try to read the researcher's intentions in order to give 'correct' replies. In addition, it will never be

known whether those who failed to return questionnaires would have given the same range of responses as those that did.

### *3.22 Survey Content*

As explained in section **3.2** most of the current survey (questions 1-16 and 22-28) consisted of an exact replication of L. Green's (see **Appendix A**). However certain areas of inquiry were expanded through the inclusion of additional questions (17-21) concerning pupils' relationships with jazz, extra curricular provision and the gendering of participation across various departmental activities. Overall, seven aspects of departmental provision were scrutinised: four were information based and required details about respondents' personal attributes, the workings of their departments (e.g. staffing, instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities), pupil participation in music (e.g. GCSE/BTEC, instrumental lessons numbers and gender breakdown) and technological facilities in existence; the other three sought respondents' personal opinions and beliefs concerning musical activities and gender, musical styles and gender, and curriculum, pedagogy and gender.

### *3.23 Survey Distribution*

As L. Green had collected data from 78 HoDs of music across a selection of mixed, non-denominational and non-selective schools in England, it was my intention to do likewise. The survey was distributed (at various intervals) to randomly selected establishments possessing the required profiles, and from all educational authorities in England (except those with selective secondary policies). Some respondents were invited to complete it via an e-mail which included a link to an on-line version of the questionnaire (constructed using the on-line tool 'Survey Monkey'); others were contacted via conventional postal methods through an introductory letter to which was attached a printed version (See **Appendix A**). All were also given the opportunity to receive the alternative version of the questionnaire if their preference was to complete it in a different format. This process took place across a period of four months until 78 replies had been collected, after which distribution ceased.

These alternative methods of dissemination were adopted in order to reach as wide an audience as possible. On-line surveys have many obvious benefits to the

researcher being cost-free, easy to administrate and having in-built propensity for the effective grouping of initial data results (Glover & Bush, 2005). Nevertheless they can also result in the under-representation of certain groups within the population, especially those who have limited technological skill-sets or lack confidence in this area (Aldridge & Levine, 2002). Therefore, being mindful that the sole use of an on-line survey might skew outcomes in favour of certain groups, a postal version was also utilised in order to counter-balance this likelihood. (More details concerning distribution can be found in **Appendix B**.)

### *3.24 Data Analysis of the First Stage*

After the collection of survey data had ceased, all closed responses were then reduced via pre-coding and open-ended replies by post-coding (through the development of a suitable framework in which categorical groupings naturally emerged from the data itself). Most of the resulting quantitative information (apart from that emanating from the same questions asked by L. Green/A. Green concerning musical activities and musical genres) has little direct bearing upon the research question itself but provides an interesting insight into the nature of current-day music departments (see **Appendix B**). Indeed this data was further analysed using the statistical software package SPSS in order to explore whether there were any noticeable variations across schools regarding geographical region, specialist subject designation or respondents' gender. (Since nothing of great significance was detected, this information appears in **Appendix D** rather than the main body of the thesis).

All qualitative data were then loosely placed into large scale thematic areas using the QDA (qualitative data analysis) computer package NVivo. These categories were not imposed from any pre-existing models, or with the framework for the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy in mind (Table 4) but emerged naturally as data were scrutinised. The resulting umbrella themes such as 'enjoyment of school music', 'musical attributes and behaviours', 'curriculum activities', 'musical genres', 'teaching and learning styles', 'extra-curricular interests' and 'KS4 music' subsequently developed into chapters of the thesis although this was not an intentional aim at the time.

Each large-scale category was then divided into emerging sub-themes. For example, the 'curriculum activities' classification naturally separated into such themes

as ‘performing’, ‘composing’, ‘listening’ and so on. In turn, these sub-themes could be further categorised; the ‘performing’ strand separated into ‘classroom performing’, ‘extra-curricular performing in school’ and ‘performing outside of school’ whilst each of these branched into divisions such as ‘formal practices’, ‘informal practices’ and ‘likes and dislikes’, amongst numerous others.

Since many of the respondents’ comments fell into multiple categories, a complex matrix of outcomes resulted, requiring much contemplation in terms of cross-referencing. Consequently there followed an intense period of scrutiny during which I fully immersed myself in the data, constantly re-reading, re-contextualising and re-analysing it in order to perceive as many connections as possible. It was only at this stage of analysis that I reconnected with the framework for identifying the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy (Table 4) in order to peruse all data in its light.

### **3.3 The Sampling Strategy and Identification of Suitable Focus Departments**

Since a further aim of this data collection was to provide the stimulus for the next stage of the study, the 78 survey responses were then reconsidered in order to extract a small sample that could potentially become involved in the second stage of research. The strategy used was a non-probability or purposive one, since there was a deliberate inclusion of those respondents who met certain criteria requirements but were also potentially able to, ‘show different perspectives on the problem’ (Creswell, 2007: 62) in that they:

- Demonstrated both feminine and masculine-gendered approaches to various aspects of their music curriculum and pedagogy (as defined by the framework in Table 4). It was hypothesised that the inter-play between these strands would be of particular interest.
- Displayed some incongruity in the content of their responses when set against the factual data they had supplied. For example a respondent may have revealed evidence of a traditional, feminine-gendered curriculum in operation at KS3 however the department data revealed lots of boys opting for KS4 music.
- Were HoDs of smaller departments, preferably existing of just a couple of core members of staff, since it was hypothesised that there would be less watering down of departmental ideology in such establishments.



- Had been at least three years in post at their current school in order that their influence and ethos had been thoroughly established across both KS3 and KS4.

Due to the more time-consuming and stressful nature of this stage of research it was acknowledged that some respondents who fulfilled these criteria, would not want to take part in the process. Nevertheless three HoDs, contacted in the first phase of sampling (and their respective head teachers) agreed to the research being carried out in their schools.

### *3.31 Reasons for Selecting the Respondents and their Departments*

The three departments were chosen for very different reasons as expressed in the following sub-sections. Note that in order to preserve anonymity whilst also revealing certain characteristics of their demography, these focus schools have been given the following titles: Suburban Street, Seaside Town and Rural Country.

#### *3.311 Suburban Street*

This department appeared to exhibit a combination of masculine and feminine-gendered aspects when reviewed in the light of the gendered framework (Table 4); how these may have clashed or complemented each other was thus of interest. In the initial questionnaire the respondent had stated that he believed there to be little difference in how most girls and boys approached and enjoyed music nowadays (singing being the only obvious activity that remained strongly feminine-gendered) saying:

***Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):*** With a more technical approach to the whole subject of music teaching in schools, differences between the sexes have blurred to the extent that all pupils take part in all aspects of the curriculum.

Nevertheless this statement was somewhat at odds with details provided elsewhere concerning boys' and girls' musical involvement in the department. In particular there were discrepancies between the beliefs expressed and data in that:

- The KS3 curriculum appeared very practically and technically orientated with such topics as 'Live bands' and 'Computers and Jazz' units featuring as early as

term 1 in Year 7 and continued across all three years of KS3. How KS3 classroom experiences affected pupils' KS4 choices was deemed of particular interest especially since the use of pop styles and technology are known to be attractive to boys (Green, 1997).

- Nevertheless the numbers of girls and boys learning particular instruments and attending departmental extra-curricular activities appeared to adhere to established traditions concerning the gendering of instruments and instrumental tuition<sup>14</sup>. This was all the more significant to investigate since the teacher respondent had indicated that these areas were not gender-stereotypical despite providing survey data suggesting quite the opposite.
- The gendering of KS4 music groups appeared conventional. Girls dominated GCSE groups, suggesting that this course was feminine-gendered in terms of curriculum and pedagogy, whilst boys prevailed in BTEC groups implying that this programme was masculine-gendered in these respects.

Additional matters of interest included:

- The staff consisted of two full-time male teachers, both with strong technological leanings. How this may have exacerbated gendered dynamics across the department was of potential significance therefore, especially in comparison to other research in this area (Armstrong, 2008, 2011). In addition, both men were from different ends of the age spectrum thus how musical training had affected their respective pedagogies was of further interest.
- There was extremely good extra-curricular provision. The department organised some highly talented musical ensembles, including a dance band that represented the school at national competition level. Since the presence of outstanding levels of instrumental performance is believed to have an adverse effect upon the average pupil's perceptions of personal musical ability (Bray, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002), the effect of this was of concern but especially regarding boys who are less likely to possess formal skills (ABRSM, 1994, Hallam, 1998, Hallam & Prince, 2000, O'Neill et al., 2001, Hallam et al., 2008).
- The ways in which staff perceived the usefulness of technology were variable. Despite the department possessing some excellent facilities that were widely

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<sup>14</sup> See footnote 10 on page 45 for relevant literature.

used in the delivery of the curriculum across all age ranges, there appeared to be issues surrounding its value since the respondent raised the following concern:

***Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):*** It allows ‘composing’ with little understanding of the conventions of musical composition let alone notation...

This comment indicates a level of discomfort about technology’s ability to defy the need for formal musical knowledge; the very placing of the word composing in quotes suggests that the respondent did not believe pupils to be doing this unless they possessed a separate theoretical understanding, divorced from the act of creativity itself.

### *3.312 Seaside Town*

This HoD provided very detailed and thought-provoking replies to the questionnaire and many of these inform and enlighten issues throughout the thesis. Her view that pupils’ musical beliefs and behaviours were strongly gendered was potentially interesting to explore in light of the profile of the department in that:

- It was modern, well resourced, technologically advanced, with a young staff, including those who had much experience in the world of rock/popular musics and technology.
- Peripatetic lessons were only available in guitar, drums and voice after pupils had opted for KS4 music whilst there was no tuition in any orchestral or band instruments. Since these are the primary instruments of performance in popular genres (whilst males are known to be more active in playing them<sup>15</sup>) it was hypothesised that examination courses were particularly attractive to boys.
- Only BTEC music was offered in this school at KS4, a course that can be moulded more easily than GCSE to personal needs and interests. Once again this was an important consideration regarding boys’ known preferences for pupil-directed learning in music (Green, 2002a, 2006, 2008, Abramo, 2011, Hallam et al., 2008, 2011).
- There were no extra-curricular activities taking place apart from some timetabled enrichment activities. How this impacted upon pupils’ KS4 choices was deemed relevant to explore, especially since research indicates that pupil

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

who learn music solely in the classroom have greater confidence in their work and less feelings of inadequacy when compared to those who are exposed to their peers' musical excellence (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002, O'Neill 2002, Lamont et al., 2003). Once again, since boys are less likely to have experience of formal instrumental learning, it was hypothesised that the situation in this department may have positively encouraged their engagement.

- Despite all of the above, the KS3 curriculum appeared more conventional than expected, especially in its limited use of technology in Years 7 and 8. The effect of this upon students' likelihood of opting for music at KS4 had potential significance therefore.

Overall, it was this department's mix of masculine- and feminine-gendered elements and how they might affect pupils initial and on-going engagement with music that appeared significant.

### *3.313 Rural Country*

According to the framework regarding the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy (Table 4) this department exhibited many feminine-gendered traits, especially in terms of KS3 practices. However the HoD did not recognise that gender played any part in the dynamics of music-teaching, suggesting that males and females were equal in their preferences concerning musical activities and genres. He also repeatedly avoided any explanations for his survey responses preferring to give factual information rather than express opinions. In the last section of the questionnaire the respondent finally referred to gender and music saying:

***Mr Brewer (Rural Country):*** The curriculum is based on the premise that music is intrinsic to human life. Classroom music is based on a series of projects that students work through at their own speed according to their abilities and experiences. We believe that the work is conceptually, technically and musically progressive. Therefore we have the expectation that all of the students will access all areas of the work. In this respect, gender is not an issue.

This denial seemed all the more fascinating when the following aspects of the departmental data were considered:

- GCSE numbers had increased vastly in the last couple of years but particularly in terms of boys opting; there were currently 34 taking music but only 13 girls. This suggested that KS3 curriculum and pedagogy were more likely to be masculine-gendered, thus naturally attracting more boys at KS4.
- KS3 curriculum information did not support this notion however since it appeared to be based on the traditions of the Western canon with a strong emphasis upon the learning of formal notation, known to be particularly unpopular with boys (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). Issues of pupils' class and cultural identities were certainly a potential source of explanation for this anomaly although it was impossible to substantiate this until fieldwork was carried out.
- It was also impossible to speculate from such limited information as to how these topics may have been delivered in terms of the pedagogical strategies employed and how these might encourage or discourage girls' and boys' participation accordingly.
- Departmental information indicated that there were limited technological facilities for KS3 classes to access. In this respect the delivery of the curriculum could not have been particularly progressive, as asserted by the HoD (nor indeed masculine-gendered according to the framework (Table 4)).
- The gendering of instrumental tuition and extra-curricular attendance were in keeping with traditional expectations. As in Suburban Street this department appeared to have good extra-curricular provision and large numbers of pupils taking instrumental lessons therefore the issue of non-instrumentalists musical identities was also of great interest.
- Since the HoD had been in place for so many years and did not appear to have instigated any new curriculum content or pedagogical strategies of late, it was pertinent to investigate whether other recent personnel changes had affected the gender balance at KS4.

Of particular interest in this department were the apparent anomalies, especially in terms of the mismatch between the feminine-gendered nature of KS3 curriculum and pedagogy and the dominance of boys opting for GCSE.

### **3.4 Second Stage of Research: Collecting Further Qualitative Data**

The second stage of the study required extensive data collection within these three focus departments. A triangulation of methods was utilised, employing of a variety of approaches, including; formal observations, participant-observations, individual and group interviews, reviewing departmental documentation and writing fieldwork diaries (including on-the-spot observational notes and post-observational, reflective writing). I utilised a diverse range of procedures since prior research suggests that congruent outcomes, as emerging from very different sources, help to endorse the validity and reliability of findings (Cohen et al., 2007: 141).

#### *3.41 Empirical Settings; Snapshots of the Schools and their Music Departments*

In order to put these schools into greater context there now follows a brief overview of each and their music departments.

##### *3.411 Suburban Street*

Suburban Street was situated in a borough of a large city, being a popular and high-achieving establishment. At the time of the research it was a specialist Performing Arts College of 800+ pupils aged from 11 to 16 (it is now an Academy) and awarded extra pupil places to those demonstrating particular talent in the performing arts (and comprising around 10% of the overall population). The school had close links with partnership community arts groups, primary and other secondary schools, all having access to the school's specialist facilities and staff.

In socio-economic terms, the majority of non-selected pupils came from working-class homes within the immediate catchment area around the school. Notably, fewer than 1 in 10 adults had experience of higher education in the three council districts in which most students lived, compared to approximately 1 in 4 nationally (according to the 2011 census for England and Wales). Nevertheless, those pupils who attended the school on performing arts places came from further afield and were potentially more likely to come from homes with a higher socio-economic profile.

At the time of research, the proportion of students with a minority ethnic heritage was slightly below average (at around 10%) whilst those with a statement of

special educational needs or supported at school action plus level was above average (9.7%). There were also slightly more boys than girls (this had been the case for a number of years) possibly as a result of the number of girls' schools in the vicinity. The teaching staff consisted of:

- A male HoD of three years teaching experience who had previously trained on a GTP programme in this school.
- A male assistant (and the former HoD) of 39 years experience, having been 25 years in this school, who had replied to the questionnaire. He was now in the role of Performing Arts manager and preparing to retire in the next academic year.
- A female GTP who was working in this school as her main placement.
- A part-time Performing Arts Technician who ran the recording studio and network.

Departmental facilities included two large main teaching rooms, an office, an instrument store, four practice rooms and a fully equipped recording studio. Both classrooms contained 15 pupil computer stations, a teacher station and an interactive whiteboard. Computers ran a number of music programmes including Sibelius 4, Cubase, and Band in a Box whilst Cubase SX ran in the recording studio and on some other individual computers situated in practice rooms. The department had KS4 examination courses in GCSE and BTEC First Certificate in Music (since 2006).

### *3.412 Seaside Town*

Seaside Town was an 11-18 academy of around 1200+ students which opened in September 2007 (replacing a formerly failing 11-16 school according to Ofsted judgements) and possessed three designated subject specialisms; in the Arts, European Culture and Media. At the time of the research, around one in eight pupils came from diverse ethnic backgrounds with EAL (English as an Additional Language) pupils at the national average. However almost half of the school population had special educational needs or disabilities (double the national average). Many students in Year 7 arrived possessing National Curriculum levels that were well below expectations for their age whilst examination results, although consistently improving, remained below national averages.

The department was in the process of staff reorganisation and consisted of:

- A female head of house who replied to the survey and was currently acting as the HoD, having formerly been in this role.
- A part-time male classroom/guitar teacher who taught some of the BTEC courses and all guitar lessons.
- A full-time female classroom teacher (and former HoD in a previous school) who taught most of the Yr 7 and 8 groups and a little BTEC.
- A vice-principal (and former music teacher) and who taught the few remaining Yr 7 and 8 classes.
- A further musician with no qualified teacher status, who had come from a music industry background, and was appointed HoD earlier in the school year. He had resigned from the job due to the stressful demands of the post (despite having a small teaching load) and was now working as a departmental technician whilst still teaching some KS5 BTEC.

The school had only run a KS4 music course since becoming an academy, having never taught GCSE in its previous incarnation. Music BTEC had been introduced by the HoD since she believed it to be more appropriate to the needs and interests of her students. In the year in which the research took place the school had just introduced BTEC courses for Year 9 pupils (except for those with extensive learning difficulties who were following a specialist foundation course). Reasons for their early introduction included that they focused students upon future career paths (who might not see the value of learning otherwise) whilst providing an extra academic year in which to achieve overall certification.

Facilities were good in this ultra-modern department which included one large classroom and one smaller teaching room (both with interactive whiteboards), an office, a recording studio and numerous practice rooms. The department had several drum kits, lots of keyboards, guitars and amplifiers plus plenty of classroom percussion including a full set of samba drums. The technological situation was less satisfactory; there were 15 PCs in the main room running only Sibelius software (which was clearly unsuitable for the majority of pupils who had limited experience of notation). Although there were a further 10 Apple Macs and 5 PCs (that could be turned into Mini-Macs) using such programmes as Cubasis and Logic these were only available to older students. The department ran BTEC classes in Years 9, 10 and 11 and KS5 BTEC too.



### *3.413 Rural Country*

Rural Country was a mixed comprehensive of around 1000+ pupils aged 11-18, serving a wide area of countryside. It achieved Business and Enterprise status in 2004 and was designated a further specialism, Science, in 2009. It had consistently achieved good KS4 and KS5 examination results across many years and had been judged outstanding according to all previous Ofsted inspections. The school served an area of contrasting, but broadly above average, socio-economic characteristics and the majority of pupils appeared articulate, well behaved, and expressed high aspirations. There were a handful of EAL students from ethnic minorities whilst only 4.3% of pupils had educational statements of need or were receiving school action plus assistance. Parental experience of higher education was well above the national average. Departmental staff included:

- A male HoD who had worked all his life in this school (around 34 years) initially as the violin teacher and then in the classroom. He was preparing to retire and only worked four days per week.
- A female in her fourth year of teaching in this department with five years total experience. She was shortly to be made joint HoD in order to fully assume this role in the next year.
- A part-time female who taught a day and a half in total. She was of retirement age, having worked in the school for over 20 years.

Facilities were extremely cramped, the department having just one main room that could take an entire class of 30 pupils and a smaller room catering for 15 pupils and only suitable for teaching KS4 and KS5 groups. In the unfortunate situation where two KS3 classes were timetabled together, one would have to use the adjoining non-specialist drama facilities. There were also other small practice rooms in the building, and a joint drama/music office. The department had less than 20 computers, most being housed in the smaller teaching room and thus only available to KS4/5 pupils. Just five computers were situated in the main classroom, therefore very few KS3 pupils had the opportunity to use them. Software was also aimed at notation-aware musicians with Sibelius 4 predominating. The room had a computer station for the teacher, an interactive whiteboard and plenty of electronic equipment available for general classroom recording. The department ran two large GCSE classes at KS4 plus A level music and A level Music Technology courses at KS5.

### 3.42 Methods and Data Analysis at the Second Stage of Research

This phase was carried out after preparatory visits to each department in order to meet staff, gather general information, set dates for observations/interviews and discuss any issues or concerns arising. It occurred across a two year period between 2009 and 2011. In total, 21 observations took place across the three departments (8 at KS3, 7 at KS4 and 6 extra-curricular) whilst 7 teacher interviews and 45 group interviews of pupils occurred (24 at KS3 and 21 at KS4). Exact details of these are shown in Table 5 below.

Type of activity	Suburban Street	Seaside Town	Rural Country
KS3 Year 7 class observations	1	2	1
KS3 Year 8 class observations	0	1	1
KS3 Year 9 class observations	1	n/a	1
KS4 GCSE observations	2	0	2
KS4 BTEC observations	1	2	0
Extra-curricular observations	3	n/a	3
Year 7 small group interviews	4 (2 girl/2 boy)	4 (2 girl/2 boy)	4 (2 girl/2 boy)
Year 8 small group interviews	n/a	4 (2 girl/2 boy)	n/a
Year 9 small group interviews	4 (2 girl/2 boy)	n/a	4 (2 girl/2 boy)
GCSE small group interviews	6 (4 girl/2 boy)	0	6 (3 girl/3 boy)
BTEC small group interviews	5 (2 girl/3 boy)	4 (2girl/2 boy)	0
Individual teacher interviews	2	3	2

**Table 5: Showing total number of observations and interviews carried out in the focus schools**

A list of questions asked to both teachers and pupils can be found in **Appendix C**.

#### 3.421 Lesson Observations

When observing I intentionally took a more ethnographic approach, absorbing aspects of the teachers' styles and methods alongside the students' behaviours and responses whilst, 'watching what happens, listening to what is said; in fact collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues' (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995: 2). This strategy is useful when one wishes to explore the differences between normative statements (what people say they do) and actual practice (what they appear to do). In

terms of formal lessons, each HoD was observed teaching two KS3 classes (one from Year 7 and the other from Year 9) during which their practices and the responses of students could be simultaneously scrutinized. Two assistant teachers also invited me to attend KS3 lessons, despite no insistence upon this in the original research planning, and these opportunities were willingly taken. Meanwhile more informal observations also took place including watching KS4 groups at work (in all three schools) and participating in extra-curricular rehearsals (in two of them).

As a consequence, observational methods were diverse and ‘fit-for-purpose’ according to the nature of the activities being undertaken (Scott & Usher, 1999); some involved a minimally intrusive, passive role (such as during teacher-led, whole-class activities), others were of a more ‘observer-as-participant’ nature (as when working alongside pupils in group activities), whilst a few were dominantly participatory (such as playing in a school orchestra). Since I believe that all forms of observation have their merits and drawbacks regarding their levels of objectivity and accountability I contend that that by using a range of procedures I was able to achieve a suitable balance between ‘involvement with detachment, closeness with distance, familiarity with strangeness’ (Cohen et al., 2007). In most cases, except for total participation, I took field notes, whilst simultaneously recording events through the use of a digital voice recorder. These were subsequently transcribed and reflected upon within 24 hour of them having taken place. In activities where I participated, information and observations were documented as soon as possible after the events.

### *3. 422 Teacher Interviews*

During individual teacher interviews, which were digitally recorded, I conversed with seven full-time staff members from across the schools including the three HoDs who had replied to the questionnaire. The interviews were semi-structured; although there were seven pre-determined questions to be answered, there was also plenty of scope for the interview to become non-directive at times. A respondent was thus able to express ‘subjective feelings as fully and as spontaneously as s/he chooses or is able’ (Cohen et al., 2007: 356). The following questions were asked:

1. Tell me about your own musical identity. (Interviewees could explore any avenues from formal training to informal practices and musical interests.)

2. How has this impacted upon your classroom teaching? (Interviewees were encouraged to explore how this has affected their teaching style and the construction of their departmental curricula/extra-curricular provision.)
3. What do you think are the most important things about being a music educator?
4. What do you believe that pupils think about music in their KS3 years? What stays the same and what changes in pupils' behaviours and beliefs across this three year period?
5. How do your KS3 curriculum and teaching strategies reflect this?
6. In your view, what sort of pupils are most likely to go on to opt for KS4 music and why?
7. To what extent do boys and girls exhibit different beliefs and behaviours in music in school?

Specific questions concerning gender were deliberately asked towards the end of interviews since I hypothesised that too early an emphasis upon this might have caused respondents to restrict their focus, thus stifling wider beliefs that could equally inform and elucidate the research question.

Meanwhile further questioning involved three specific strands: enquiring about things (behavioural, strategic, or practical) that had emerged during the departmental observations; exploring new issues that materialised during the current questioning; investigating anomalies occurring between what individuals said and their practices as witnessed during observations; and following up survey responses where applicable. Plenty of opportunities were also provided for respondents to expand upon any other areas that they perceived to be of importance or to redirect the conversations into new territories. As in the collection of survey data, I fully embraced the unexpected, not only in its potential to allow new data to emerge but also in its ability to 'provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves' (Kvale, 1996: 30).

### *3.423 Pupil Interviews*

A variety of students from across the schools were also selected for interview, the only proviso being that there should be roughly similar numbers of girls and boys involved overall in order to ensure a balanced representation. Having no prior knowledge of any pupils, I chose participants indiscriminately, from across a range of KS3 and KS4

classes. I then interviewed these students in small groups since this forum was considered less intimidating and enabled them to challenge each other whilst allowing the use of shared 'peer' language that cannot so easily be employed in a one-to one, adult-to-child interaction (Cohen et al., 2007). A major drawback, concerning any one interviewee's ability to dominate the proceedings (and thus causing others to withhold opinions in order to avoid disharmony), was nonetheless fully acknowledged.

Interviews were also held in single-sexed groups, of between three and seven participants, since I believed that this would most likely promote greater openness without offence being taken by the opposite sex when questions of gender arose (Arksey & Knight, 1999). I deliberately chose random individuals to participate rather than groups of friends since the latter might have resulted in interviewees possessing similar musical profiles and tastes (such as all being orchestral instrumentalists or fans of a particular genre) rather than promoting a wider mix of responses. However I fully acknowledge that friendship-based discussions have equal validity in that they can often promote more trusting environments and consequently greater ease of conversation.

Pupil interviews, like those for teachers, were semi-structured; exploring issues surrounding feelings and beliefs about the subject via explicit questioning whilst also allowing conversations to take their own directions at times. Although a range of pre-set areas were covered in the discussions they remained 'pupil-centred; I took a facilitative role 'picking up on issues the interviewees raised and encouraging them to develop and reflect upon these and to provide illustrative narrative accounts' (Frosh et al., 2003: 86). All participants were given the right of initial refusal and the power to withdraw during the process if they so wished, however none chose to do so. KS3 students were asked:

1. How much do you enjoy class music lessons; what do you like doing and/or not like doing in them?
2. Do you have instrumental lessons or take part in any extra-curricular activities within the music department?
3. How likely are you to choose music as a KS4 option and why might that be?
4. What sorts of people are most likely to opt for music at KS4?
5. What do you think about boys/girls in music lessons; do they like the same things and do they behave in the same way?

KS4 pupils were asked:

1. What do you enjoy about your KS4 music course?
2. Do you have instrumental lessons or take part in any extra-curricular activities within the music department?
3. What were your reasons for choosing KS4 music?
4. What sorts of people are most likely to opt for music at KS4?
5. What do you think about boys/girls in music lessons; do they like the same things and do they behave in the same way?

As in the adult interviews, I did not intend to explore gender issues from the outset for fear of narrowing the pupils' focus at too early a stage. In addition it was speculated that this strategy allowed plenty of scope for pupils to express their ideas across apparently unrelated areas that might equally inform the research question.

### *3.424 Data Analysis of the Second Stage*

Formal interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed as soon as possible after they had taken place in order to maximise the authenticity of the original situation. Despite this, I remained aware that the process decontextualises the event in terms of its original time, space, and social and interactive dynamics (Cohen et al., 2007). Kvale (1996: 166) suggests that the activity of transcribing an aural recording, whereby there is a translation from an oral, interpersonal dimension to a written, impersonal one, results in an inevitable loss of certain aspects of the data. This includes participants' body language, facial expressions and exterior events surrounding the interview. (Despite this, I decided not to use video to record proceedings believing it to be too obtrusive and distracting). All transcriptions were scrutinised and coded, with the help of NVivo software during the initial stages, in the same way that qualitative data from the original survey were analysed (see 3.24). A primary concern, which had not occurred during earlier analysis, was to resist overly fragmenting a transcription, causing its parts to no longer reflect the essence and context of the entire original (Cohen et al. 2007: 368).

As with the first stage of research, umbrella themes were allowed to surface without specific reference to the content of the framework for discerning the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy (Table 4) or its related literature. Many of the same large-scale categories emerged as before including; enjoyment of school music, musical

attributes and behaviours, curriculum activities, musical genres, teaching and learning styles, extra-curricular participation and KS4 music. In turn these areas sub-divided into many of the strands and tiers pertaining to the first stage data.

Although new themes also appeared (both due to the wider nature of the questioning but also the capacity for respondents to explore issues in far greater depth) these were naturally assimilated into the overall matrix of responses. After further consideration and analysis, all qualitative data from both stages were eventually merged into a single body of information. It was at this point in the process that I once again reconnected with the conceptual framework (Table 4) in order to review the data in light of its criteria for the purposes of writing the thesis.

### **3.5 The Research Participants and Ethical Issues**

In total 85 teachers contributed comments to the study, 78 via the questionnaire in the first stage of research and seven in the second phase. Meanwhile 192 pupils took part in interviews, either formally in group discussions or informally as part of class observations. At KS3, 124 students (65 boys and 59 girls) were involved, 97 participating via formal semi-structured interviews of which 49 were from Year 7 pupils (25 boys and 24 girls) and 48 from Year 9 (23 boys and 25 girls). Further comments were collected informally during some KS3 lesson observations from 27 students (10 girls and 17 boys). At KS4, 68 students took part (32 girls and 36 boys) with 62 being formally interviewed. In terms of examination courses, 30 were studying GCSE (15 girls and 15 boys) whilst 38 were studying BTEC (17 girls and 21 boys)<sup>16</sup>. Wide-ranging viewpoints and behaviours were expressed by teachers and pupils alike and indeed multiple constructions of masculinity and femininity were evident in their responses and actions. Despite this, dominant themes concerning perceived gendered norms clearly emerged and are explored in the ensuing chapters.

Although participants were made aware of the general area of investigation (music education and gender) the specific research question and detailed aims of the study were not provided. To tell the subjects what was being looked for may have biased the resulting data and consequently jeopardised its validity (Cohen et al., 2007). Therefore participants at both stages of the research were encouraged to collaborate with me in order to co-investigate a variety of issues.

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<sup>16</sup> In Seaside Town KS4 students were from Year 9 since pupils took subject options at the end of Year 8.

Meanwhile, voluntary informed consent, as laid down by BERA guidelines (2004, 2011), was considered essential at all stages of research. Participants in the questionnaire needed reassurance that it would not harm them in any way whilst understanding the potential impact of their answers to affect the reliability of data outcomes, both positively and negatively. An emphasis on ‘beneficence’ (Cohen et al., 2007: 60) was thus emphasised in that:

- Respondents were made aware that their participation would be adding to an important body of knowledge in the field of music education;
- All information was to remain confidential and respondents were assured that there was no need to fear work-place repercussions;
- Respondents were encouraged to speak openly and honestly about their departments and discouraged from feeling the need to ‘talk them up’;
- Absolute anonymity was ensured in the writing up of the research and during any future discussion of the outcomes between the researcher and outside agencies. (Participants may recognise themselves in the study, but their identity should not be evident to others).

At the second phase of the study (observations and interviews) it was recognised that those who volunteered, did so subject to the permission of gate-keepers and in compliance with the Criminal Records Bureau’s legal requirements relating to working with children. Ethical responsibility towards these participants was also considered in the light of a range of research principles as identified by Cohen et al. (2007: 77) including:

- Recognition of a participant’s right to withdraw from the procedure at any given point during the research process.
- Recognition that the very presence of the researcher had the potential to cause uninvited stress for the participants;
- Assurance that the researcher was not sitting in judgement of teachers’ classroom practice in terms labelling curricula and pedagogies as ‘good or bad’ and ‘right or wrong’ but rather judging their effect upon pupils’ responses;
- Assurance that confidentiality was to be maintained since the content of observations and conversations would not be discussed with any other persons in the school (although it may be spoken or written about as part of the researcher’s academic work in the outside world);



- Assurance that anonymity would be safeguarded during both the writing up of the thesis and any presentation of research to outside agencies (participants may recognise themselves but their identity should not be evident to outsiders);
- Assurance that their comments would be as accurately represented as possible;
- An invitation to read the data outcomes for their school or alternatively the entire thesis if they so wished (obviously this was more relevant for the adult participants).

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that critical analysis of data, despite being a vital part of the research, has sometimes promoted a sense of uneasiness in me. In particular, the dissection and evaluation of an individual's behaviours or remarks in the light of gender theory, may have presented respondents at times in a less than flattering light, this being potentially uncomfortable or embarrassing for them to read. Despite remaining sensitive to the issue I ascertain that it is only by engaging in such critique that deeper insights can be gained. It should also be noted that at the time of interviews and observations I was primarily concerned with capturing and recording the data successfully rather than appraising it; judgement occurred subsequently, during prolonged periods of analytical thought.

### **3.6 Organisation of the Remainder of the Thesis**

Since the qualitative data collected for this research study have emanated from various sources and cover a wide range of issues relating (both obviously and more subtly) to gender and music education, much of the remainder of the thesis (except Chapter 4) has been organised according to the large-scale thematic strands that materialised during data analysis (see section 3.24). In addition, all relevant literature is interwoven with data according to the theme of a chapter in order to fully elucidate each area of inquiry.

Chapter 4, 'Curriculum and Pedagogy in Music' provides both historical perspectives and a current evaluation of these elements in relation to gender, whilst directly comparing relevant aspects of the quantitative data with outcomes from L. Green's research (1993). Chapters 5-11 then examine the large-scale umbrella themes as follows: Chapter 5 'Pupils and Musical Attributes: Perceptions and Realities'; Chapter 6 'Performing and Gender'; Chapter 7 'Composing, Technology and Gender'; Chapter 8 'Listening, Appraising, Using Notation and Gender'; Chapter 9 'Musical Identities, Musical Genres and Gender'; Chapter 10 'Extra-Curricular Musical Learning and

Gender’; and Chapter 11 ‘KS4 Examination Courses in Music and Gender’. Finally, Chapter 12 reviews the research question in the light of its global outcomes and addresses the overall merits and weaknesses of the study.

Throughout the thesis I combine relevant aspects of the established literature relating to each theme with illustrative comments from teachers and pupils in order to illuminate aspects of the discourse and emphasise connections. Due to the large number of contributions, especially in some categories, representative examples have been selected by an independent reader where necessary<sup>17</sup>. In addition, excerpts from the researcher’s field note diary are drawn upon to further demonstrate a variety of issues.

The anonymous teachers who answered the questionnaire are identified by a school number from 1-78 (each randomly applied as the questionnaires were returned) e.g. *School 32*. Where a comment was made by a respondent that became part of the second stage of the study, both are signified e.g. *School 4 (Suburban Street)*. Although some of the resulting quantitative data has been analysed in terms of gender, individual teachers’ comments from the survey have not been assigned their sex, despite this being known. It is hypothesised that attempting to make gendered connections between the respondents and their replies would have been unreliable since many comments lacked detail and context whilst there was no possibility for further clarification.

Teacher interviewees are referred to by a fictitious family name which, as far as possible, reflects the gender, ethnicity and religious/cultural associations of the original, followed by their school’s assumed names e.g. *Mr Brewer: Rural Country*. Student interviewees are given first names according to the same criteria, immediately followed by the school pseudonym, plus: at KS3 an additional number (7, 8 or 9) indicating pupils’ year group membership e.g. *Lisa (Suburban Street/Yr9)*; and at KS4 the acronym of BTEC or GCSE to denote the examination course that they were following e.g. *Cody (Seaside Town/BTEC)*. My interjections during discussions are represented by the initials **AG**.

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<sup>17</sup> I chose my partner David Wheeler for help and support with this for several reasons; firstly his ease of availability, secondly his wide-ranging analytical skills developed via a long career in science and business and thirdly (and most importantly) his unfamiliarity with the field and thus greater likelihood of impartiality. I suggest that someone with more knowledge in this area might have held pre-determined views having the potential to compromise their judgement when making selections.

## **Chapter 4: Curriculum and Pedagogy in Music**

This chapter initially provides a brief history of the development of the music curriculum and related pedagogies across the later 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the new millennium, in order to place the study in context. It then presents a comparison of the quantitative outcomes of the first stage of research (the survey) with those of L. Green's (1993) focusing upon two areas: teachers' perceptions about pupils' success in musical activities in relation to gender; and teachers' perceptions about pupils' willingness to be involved in four, key genres (classical, pop, world and jazz). The final part of the chapter presents an analysis of these outcomes, exploring similarities and differences.

### **4.1 A Brief History of the Gendering of Curriculum & Pedagogy**

Despite a series of reports published across the 20<sup>th</sup> century and stressing the importance of the creative arts in intellectual development, music has generally remained recreational and non-vocational for the majority (Pitts, 2000, Cox, 1993, 2002). Having come late to the statutory curriculum and without good prior resourcing, facilities or numbers of properly trained teachers, music had maintained a 'soft' position for many decades, traditionally consisting of simple basics such as; class singing (of hymns, traditional and national songs), aural appreciation of the master works from the classical canon, and possibly some tuition in the rudiments of music and notation (Vulliamy, 1977b, Green, 2002a). Although percussion based composition (such as Orff Schulewerk), and recorder playing found their way into the system during the 1960s it appeared that the more exciting musical opportunities at this time were to be found in the realms of extra-curricular lessons and activities (Cox, 2002).

#### *4.11 The 1970s*

By the 1970s the arts in school were described as being in a, 'thoroughly depressed state' (Schools Council, 1975: 29). Despite the emergence of several conceptual models (Witkin, 1974, Paynter & Aston, 1970, Swanwick, 1979) which attempted to articulate appropriate philosophies to assist in improving teaching and learning, music was viewed by most pupils (regardless of gender) as neither useful, interesting nor prestigious. In retrospect it is easy to see how many children (particularly those from

working class homes), having an awareness of popular styles but little or no grounding in the classical repertoire, became disaffected in music lessons; a hierarchical stratification of knowledge was in operation in which the classical canon assumed a reified position at its peak.

However, a 'new sociology' of music education emerged in the 1970s, arguing that if classroom music was to have any purposeful meaning to the majority of young people, it should be pop and not classical styles that occupied supreme positions within the curriculum (Virden & Wishart, 1977, Vulliamy, 1977a). Whilst not denying the power of commercialism, it questioned the established ideology surrounding pop music that contained many misleading assumptions which must be refuted in order for it to be taken seriously. The constraints of middle class culture had for too long been, 'relegating popular music to a second class moral and aesthetic status' (Vuillamy & Shepherd, 1984: 71); all music was inherently social in its significance, therefore, this significance had to be, 'grounded in the reality, mutually constructed by the people of the particular society in which the music was created' (1984: 29).

Throughout this period music teachers had been drawn from very different experiential sources: some were graduates from universities and the Royal Schools of Music or held specialist performers qualifications, whilst others had studied for several years in teacher training colleges (Lynch, 2003). Unlike other subjects, there was also an expectation that music teachers should be very skilled practitioners, demonstrating impressive standards of performance, regardless of their teaching abilities. Other than this requirement, most were free to design their own curricula, adopting policies and programmes in accordance with personal tastes, convictions, attitudes and assumptions (Plummeridge, 1991). Some operated with reference to published theories of learning (such as those by Skinner, Piaget, Vygotsky or Bruner) but others developed doctrines that were wholly personalised and based on individual experience alone. As a consequence many were reflective about their teaching (examining how personal experience interfaced with classroom life) but not reflexive (acknowledging how these experiences might empower or constrain their pedagogical approaches (Moore, 2000)).

Furthermore, most teachers' experiences were confined to the classical canon alone; at no point in their training had they been required either to listen to or play any music, other than 'European serious music' (Vuillamy & Lee 1976/80: 46). Their reverence and respect for this tradition was often so all-encompassing that many feared having to engage with the confusing and multifarious meanings of pop styles of which

they neither possessed knowledge, nor felt any affinity towards. The use of pop music as an educational tool was unthinkable for such teachers, who believed it to be something that pupils would grow out of, as their tastes were educated towards the higher intellectual demands of classical music.

Even those who were willing to include pop in their classrooms found it difficult to accommodate, 'its non-literate and spontaneous methods of transmission' (Burnett: 1977: 46) with their own formal training. Many were also confused by, or lacked identification with, the delineated or extra-musical meanings attached to many pop genres (Green, 1988) for example, their affiliated fashions, language usage, dance styles, behaviours and so on. Although some teachers felt able to dip into the repertoire of established and highly-esteemed artists such as 'The Beatles', this occurred because these musicians had become safely 'canonised', their works having achieved reified status through transcription and analysis by eminent musicologists. Green notes that we can better understand this situation in the light of the 'pop versus classical split' that has evolved from a history of musical fetishism (see section 9.3); the eliciting of unquestioning reverence and respect towards a hierarchy of apparently superior music whether this be classical or 'classic' pop.

#### *4.12 The 1980s and 90s*

Moves towards mass globalisation in the 1980s created rapid change both economically and socially. Interculturalism encouraged wider respect for a vast array of alternative musics whilst also dispelling the notion that certain styles were exclusive to particular social or cultural groups. Teacher training courses began to encourage their students (to whom popular culture was part of their inheritance) to explore the use of such musics as a means of overcoming pupils' general lack of interest in classroom music. The radical changes that this new generation of music educators instigated, profoundly influenced the nature of the classroom experience and indeed the next generation of exam syllabi.

Meanwhile a ground-breaking report 'Music from 5-16: A Discussion Document' (DES, 1985a), hailed as the first post-war paper to deal specifically with the perceived problems, argued for a cohesive national curriculum based around the integration of performing, composing and listening activities. The two tier system which denied most students access to the elitist 'O' level was also to be cast aside in favour of a single exam, the GCSE (DES, 1986, DfEE/QCA, 1999, QCA, 2007).

New practices at GCSE were quickly followed by the establishment of a centralised National Curriculum via the Education Reform Act of 1988, which enforced a music programme for all pupils in maintained schools from 1992 onwards. Although there was much initial disagreement concerning recommended content (DES, 1991a, NCC, 1992a), whilst some educationalists perceived its imposition as regressive (Shepherd & Vulliamy, 1994), the statutory provision of music for those aged 5-14 raised the subject's status. In spite of its original weighty and prescriptive nature, the National Curriculum was subsequently pared down into a more manageable form (DFE, 1995) with further adjustments implemented in 2000 and 2008 (QCA, 2007, DCFS, 2009, DfE, 2013).

Throughout this period many teachers, either willingly or begrudgingly, began to redefine their pedagogical approaches according to the new curriculum; establishing practically orientated programmes of performing, composing and listening/appraising activities whilst utilising a range of genres including various ethnic and pop styles. Indeed Green's later survey (2002b), comparing a range of comprehensive teachers' beliefs and behaviours with those of her earlier research (1993) indicated that in a relatively short time, much had changed; most notably classical music, previously the most utilised genre in the classroom, had given way to pop.

Meanwhile the increasing availability of music technology across the past 20 years, has further revolutionised teaching and learning in the classroom. As computer hardware and software have become more affordable, stable and reliable, the nature of many music departments has dramatically changed both physically, regarding organisation of resources and teaching spaces, and pedagogically, in terms of how the subject is conveyed. Technology has the ability to promote greater flexibility in the teaching and learning environment, stimulating levels of creativity and imaginativeness in all students by providing a wide range of digital sound resources and recording possibilities. Most importantly, it removes barriers between those who identify themselves as 'musician' as opposed to 'non-musician' in that it can, 'help overcome the traditional restrictions between innate, creative musicality and acquired performing skills' (Desmond, 2002: 159), thus assisting those pupils unable to express themselves through formal notation or live instrumental improvisation (Mills & Murray, 2000). Despite these positive attributes, technology's gendered implications are far-reaching and will be further explored in section 7.3.

#### 4.13 Recent Initiatives

Since the turn of this century, more educational initiatives have emerged intending to improve all students' engagement with music, including:

- The Secondary National Strategy for Music<sup>18</sup>: an optional KS3 scheme of work creating a framework by which pupils are helped to progress in music in order to improve the, 'depth of their knowledge, skills and understanding... whilst experiencing a breadth of the musical activities and repertoire' (DCSF, 2009).
- Sing Up<sup>19</sup>: A £40 million pound government invested programme (between 2007 and 2011) instigating a national programme of singing, initially in primary schools. Sing Up is now a non distributing limited company from which individuals, schools, and local authorities can access different levels of membership (according to cost) in order to obtain resources and training.
- Musical Futures<sup>20</sup>: a project (begun in 2003 by the Paul Hamlyn foundation) creating partnerships across the formal and informal sectors of arts education with the aim of influencing educational policy in order, 'to devise new and imaginative ways of engaging young people in music activities as an entitlement for all 11-19 year olds' (Price 2007: 26). The informal pedagogies underpinning the project are currently being implemented in around 1500 schools across the country (D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014) whilst the foundation provides both on-line resources and regional training for teachers wishing to partake.
- The 'In Harmony' project<sup>21</sup>: established in 2009. Originally funded by the Department for Education and Arts Council England, this is currently being rolled out in six of the poorest areas across England. It is a system of music education based on the premises of the 'El Sistema' programme of musical learning from Venezuela, whereby children in socially deprived areas are given the opportunity to achieve their full potential through an intensive music experience based on the symphony orchestra.
- In addition a vast array of in-school projects have been provided by the outreach education and community departments of many of the UK's professional orchestras and opera companies.

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<sup>18</sup> <http://www.teachingmusic.org.uk/resource/14368>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.singup.org>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.musicalfutures.org>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.ihse.org.uk>

Of these initiatives it is perhaps Musical Futures that has the greatest relevance to this study in that the project aims to encourage institutions to redefine their philosophies in order to deliver school music in alternative ways. Unlike the Secondary National Strategy for Music (DCFS, 2009) (which is predominantly teacher-led in terms of the planning objectives, the development of learning resources and modes of assessment), Musical Futures suggests that the curriculum requires greater personalisation so that pupils can make individual choices and decisions in order to take full control of their learning (Hallam et al., 2011, D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014). A parallel re-conceptualisation of the role of the educator is also necessary in order to create an environment where teachers' musical skills can meet pupils' greater knowledge of style in order for a real dialogue to emerge. Since I contend that such methods of learning are inherently masculine-gendered in both their essence and appeal (a notion that is examined across this thesis), it appears that their increasing adoption has the potential to radically alter future patterns of pupil participation in school music, including at KS4 examination level.

#### *4.14 Current Teacher Training*

In the last decade it has also become apparent that teacher trainees do not necessarily identify classical music as the most superior genre; many listen to and perform in a wide range of other styles whilst fully embracing the use of world and pop musics in their classrooms (Green, 2002b). These educators reveal confidence in utilising more informal models of musical learning such as that suggested by Musical Futures, but according to Green, often express a level of trepidation when putting them into practice. The problem appears to result from the aforementioned clash between the principles of informal, progressive and pupil-centred educational philosophies, as exemplified by Musical Futures, with the formal, target driven and teacher-led conventions as epitomised in the current National Curriculum for Music (DFE, 2011).

Some research also suggests that many higher institutions remain dominated by a professional career model (Hargreaves et al., 2003) with entry requirements continuing to demand high levels of performance standards. Thus courses tend to attract greater numbers of musicians who have acquired formal instrumental proficiencies rather than those from popular and technological fields who may possess far more appropriate skills for today's classroom environment, especially regarding the



cultivation of informal pedagogies (Lamont & Maton, 2010, Wright & Davies, 2010, Zeserson et al., 2014). Lines (2005) indicates that these undisputed grand themes or ‘metanarratives’ continue to dominate musical opinion despite the enormous changes in musical tastes occurring in the wider parameters of society. These are based upon the premise of lauding outstanding musicianship, especially that which hails from the elite musical tradition of the west and utilises, ‘controlled pedagogical systems and ordered curricula’ (2005: 2). As a consequence many educators, having been trained as performing musicians, tend to remain over-focused upon performance studies and the need to interpret someone else’s music correctly whilst over-utilising classroom strategies that derive from the instrumental pedagogies with which they are familiar, regardless of their usefulness (Witkin, 1974). Furthermore such classically- derived approaches, being inherently feminised in their construction (through an emphasis on notation-based learning) appear to have detrimental consequences in terms of how they are received in the classroom, especially by boys (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).

#### 4. 2 Questionnaire Responses regarding Musical Activities

	No reply 1993	No reply 2009-11	Boys 1993	Boys 2009-11	Girls 1993	Girls 2009-11	Both 1993	Both 2009-11	p-value
<b>Playing an Instrument</b>	0	0	0	9	35	13	43	56	0.00
<b>Singing</b>	1	1	0	1	64	65	13	11	0.56
<b>Composing</b>	0	1	10	20	5	7	63	50	0.08
<b>Listening/ Appraising</b>	0	2	0	3	11	19	67	54	0.04
<b>Using Notation</b>	0	2	0	1	27	28	51	47	0.56

**Table 6: Showing data comparison between teachers’ perceptions of pupils’ success in musical activities in relation to gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green).**

This section explores the quantitative data that emerged from the current survey (as part of the first stage of research) with the comparable outcomes from L. Green’s study (1993) concerning pupils’ involvement in musical activities. Table 6 places results from both data sets alongside one another regarding the multiple-choice options to the question, ‘In general, throughout the school, which group is the most successful at

playing an instrument, singing, composing, listening/appraising and using notation?’

In order to deduce whether beliefs about girls and boys differed significantly between the two surveys I analysed the data in SPSS using Pearson’s chi squared test of independence which evaluates how likely it is that an observed distribution is due to chance<sup>22</sup>. The results of this test appear in the final column of Table 6, labelled ‘p-value’. (For detailed outcomes of the test as applied to each question see **Appendix E**).

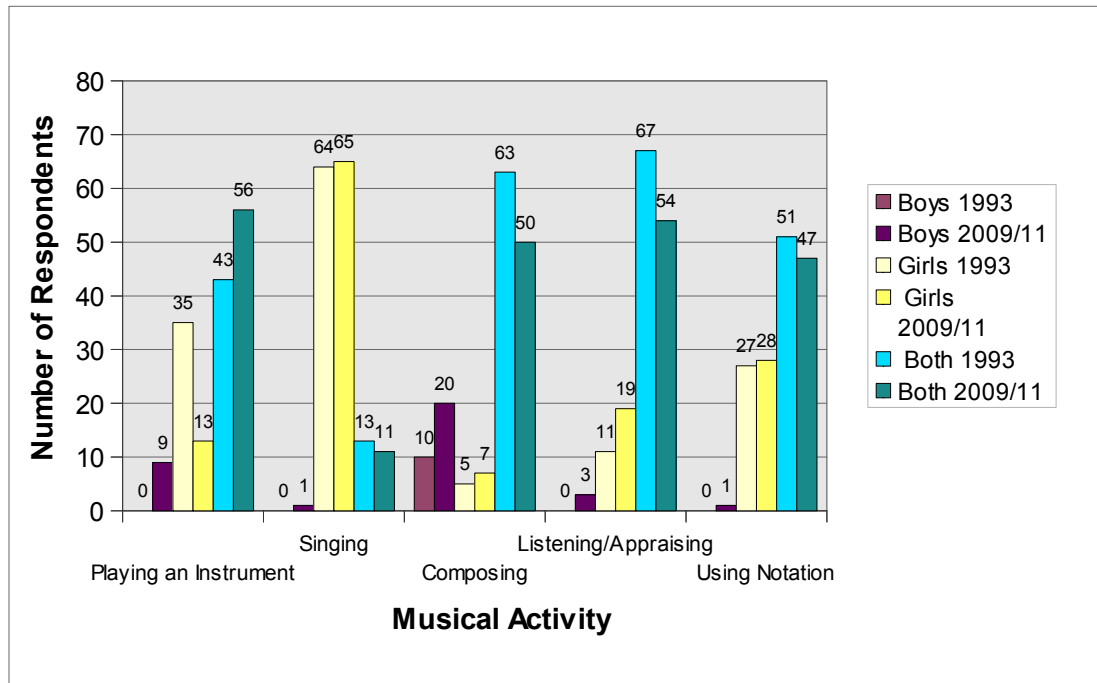
The test shows high p-values for both data sets regarding beliefs about singing and using notation, suggesting that perceptions in these areas have remained constant. Although the outcome concerning listening and appraising has a far lower p-value, it is extremely close to the standard ‘cut-off’ point, sitting on the cusp between the possibility that data differences are either due to pure chance or show evidence of a slight change<sup>23</sup>. As a consequence it is not possible to conclude whether there is any significant difference between outcomes in this area. Similarly, results concerning beliefs about composing are fairly close to the cut-off point, also denoting that there is minimal evidence to suggest that much change has occurred. However the p-value of 0 regarding the playing of an instrument indicates that there is no similarity between the data sets and consequently a shift in perceptions has occurred.

As confirmed by the chi test, close agreement between the studies occurred in beliefs about singing and using notation (in that girls achieved far greater success in the former whilst a substantial minority were deemed superior in the latter). However there were clear differences between the sets of respondents’ perceptions in other areas. Most notably, views concerning instrumental performance had diversified since more modern-day respondents believed boys and girls to partake similarly (56 as opposed to 43). In addition nine current teachers felt that boys were superior to girls in this respect (whereas none did so in 1993) whilst those regarding girls as more successful had shrunk from 35 to 13 respondents. This outcome suggests that perceptions about boys and instrumental performing have substantially altered during the interim years between surveys and it is hypothesised that at the heart of this change lies teachers’ greater familiarity with, and acceptance of, the pop and rock styles with which many boys wish to engage.

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<sup>22</sup> For a detailed explanation of this test and its uses, see Cohen et. al. (2007: 525-8).

<sup>23</sup> By convention, the cut-off point for a p-value is 0.05; anything below that is considered a very low probability of there being a connection whilst anything above is considered a reasonable probability. Thus the lower the value of p, the greater the difference between the two data sets, whilst the higher its value, the greater the similarity (with identical sets having the maximum value of p=1).



**Figure 1: Chart showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' success in musical activities in relation to gender: 1993 (L. Green) and 2009-11 (A. Green)**

Figure 1 above represents this information in an alternative format to illustrate similarities and differences between data more clearly. It also reveals that in two other disciplines, composing and listening/appraising, the 1993 respondents' beliefs about gendered success were not only confirmed by those taking part in 2009-11 but further endorsed, since numbers had slightly increased in these respective categories. Indeed those regarding boys as more successful at composing had doubled (from 10 in 1993 to 20 in the current study) whilst those suggesting girls' superiority in listening and appraising had almost doubled (from 11 to 19). These trends seem to confirm that composition continues to be considered more masculine-gendered and listening and appraising more feminine-gendered. Most importantly they counteract many respondents' anecdotal perceptions (revealed throughout the ensuing chapters) that greater gender parity exists in all musical engagement nowadays.

#### *4.21 The KS3 Curriculum*

The current study also went a stage further than the 1993 questionnaire by asking respondents to indicate whether they believed pupils' preferences for various activities to have altered as they progressed through the statutory years of school music

education. Teachers were asked to indicate pupils' liking for the prescribed activities in Year 7, and again in Year 9, in order to discern any changes.

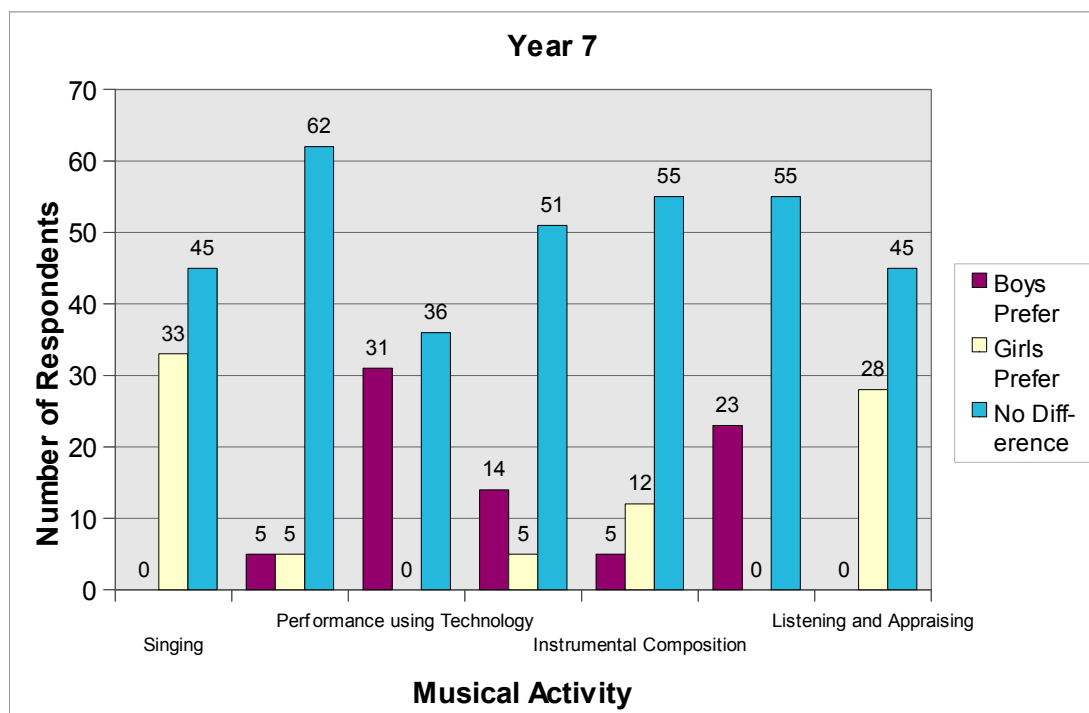
#### 4.211 Year 7

Although the 'No Difference' category was the most popular respondent choice for Year 7 pupils in each area, singing and listening/appraising were considered feminine-gendered activities by a substantial minority as revealed below.

Classroom Activity	Boys Prefer	Girls Prefer	No Difference	Total*
Singing	0	33	45	78
Instrumental Performance	5	5	62	72
Performance using Technology	31	0	36	67
Improvisation	14	5	51	70
Instrumental Composition	5	12	55	72
Composition using Technology	23	0	55	78
Listening and Appraising	0	28	45	73

\*Several respondents did not answer all of these section and it is presumed, but not proven, that some did not reply in areas that they did not consider key to their Year 7 curriculum and pedagogy.

**Table 7: Showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 7 pupils' preferences**



**Figure 2: Chart showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 7 pupils' preferences**

In contrast, the use of technologies in performance and composition, were considered to be more masculine-gendered by a similar-sized minority. Instrumental performance, instrumental composition and improvisation appeared gender-neutral however.

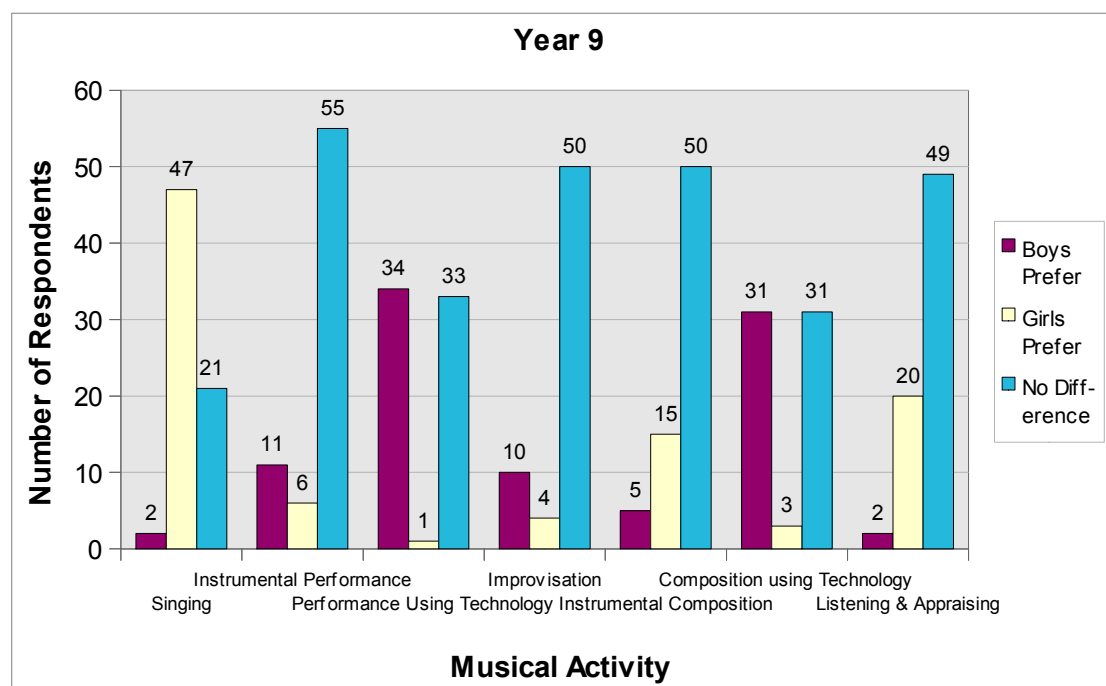
#### 4.212 Year 9

Although the majority of teachers continued to support the notion that there were no differences in the between girls and boys, some changes were evident as shown below.

Classroom Activity*	Boys Prefer	Girls Prefer	No Difference	Total*
Singing	2	47	21	70
Instrumental Performance	11	6	55	72
Performance using Technology	34	1	33	68
Improvisation	10	4	50	64
Instrumental Composition	5	15	50	70
Composition using Technology	31	3	31	65
Listening and Appraising	2	20	49	71

\*Several respondents did not answer all of these section and it is presumed, but not proven, that some did not reply in areas that they did not consider key to their Year 9 curriculum and pedagogy.

**Table 8: Showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 9 pupils' preferences**



**Figure 3: Chart showing teachers' perceptions concerning Year 9 pupils' preferences**

Most notably singing was now considered a feminine-gendered activity by the majority whilst composing using technology had become more strongly masculine-gendered and listening/appraising slightly less feminine-gendered. The growing effect of pupils' awareness of traditionally gendered roles in music is an important consideration here since it appears that teachers believe their pupils to define themselves along more conventional lines as they mature.

### 4.3 Questionnaire Responses regarding Musical Genres

This section now explores the quantitative data that emerged from the current survey (as part of the first stage of research) with the directly comparable outcomes from L. Green's study (1993) concerning pupils' engagement with musical genres. Table 9 places results from both data sets alongside one another concerning the multiple-choice reply options to the question, 'Which group, generally speaking prefers, or is more willing, to engage in classical, popular and world musics?'<sup>24</sup>.

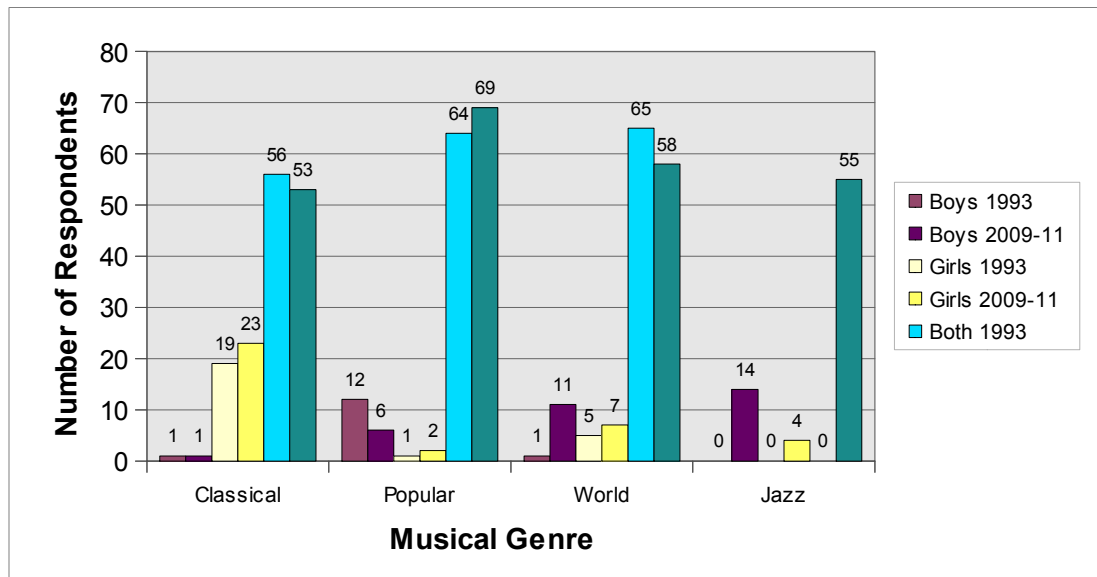
	No reply 1993	No reply 2009-11	Boys 1993	Boys 2009-11	Girls 1993	Girls 2009-11	Both 1993	Both 2009-11	p-value
<b>Classical Music</b>	2	1	1	1	19	23	56	53	0.8
<b>Popular Music(s)</b>	1	1	12	6	1	2	64	69	0.28
<b>World Music(s)</b>	7	2	1	11	5	7	65	58	0.01
<b>Jazz Styles</b>	N/A	5	N/A	14	N/A	4	N/A	55	N/A

**Table 9: Showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' willingness to engage in musical genres and gender: 1993 (L. Green) & 2009-11 (A. Green)**

As with the data concerning musical activities, it was my intention to discover whether the responses to these questions significantly differed between the surveys. Once again the data sets were analysed in SPSS using Pearson's chi squared test of independence and the results appear in the final column of the table, labelled 'p-value'. (For detailed outcomes of the test as applied to each question see **Appendix E**.) The test

<sup>24</sup> Note that although a question about jazz was included in A. Green's 2009-11 survey it was not asked by L. Green in 1993. Therefore direct comparisons between data cannot be made regarding this genre.

showed high p-values for the data sets regarding classical and pop musics, suggesting that there is no significant difference between them and that perceptions in these areas have not altered radically between surveys. However the world music category produced a low p-value, signifying that the two data sets are unlike and indicating that there has been some change in this area.



**Figure 4: Chart showing data comparison between teachers' perceptions of pupils' willingness to engage in musical genres and gender: 1993 (L. Green) & 2009-11 (A. Green)**

Figure 4 represents the data in an alternative format to emphasise these similarities and differences. As with perceptions about musical activities, the vast majority of respondents across both surveys agreed that boys and girls had similar levels of engagement; however a minority in both data sets (19 in 1993 and 23 in 2009-11) agreed that girls were more willing to participate in classical music and boys in popular styles (although this had now halved from 12 in 1993 to six currently).

Only in the world music category was more substantial disagreement evident. This area was not perceived as being more popular with boys in 1993 (with just one participant indicating thus) whereas a much larger minority (11) agreed that boys responded more favourably in 2009-11. Whether boys' are more positive nowadays because these genres are increasingly likely to be authentically resourced and delivered by appropriate oral-aural rather than notation-based methods, is certainly of some consideration here (and will be further explored in Chapter 9).

#### 4.4 The KS3 Curriculum

One final area of quantitative data collected in the survey concerned curriculum content at KS3 (KS4 was not explored as it is governed by the requirements of more rigid exam syllabi). Although all maintained schools in England and Wales must meet the demands of the National Curriculum for Music and provide integrated activities that focus upon key areas (performing, composing, listening, reviewing and evaluating (DfE, 2013)), there remains a fair amount of autonomy for departments to develop their own content.

##### 4.41 KS3 Topics

Although little could be discerned from the data concerning pedagogies utilised in the survey schools, more information was gleaned regarding curriculum content. Respondents were asked whether they used any established KS3 programmes in the construction of their courses. Over half (40) said that they used the KS3 National Strategy, one third (26) Musical Futures and around a quarter (19) Sing Up. However everyone emphasised that they did not follow programmes exclusively but cherry-picked elements as required. Respondents were also asked to name three topics that were part of their Year 7 and 9 courses in order to identify prevalent themes.

##### 4.411 Year 7

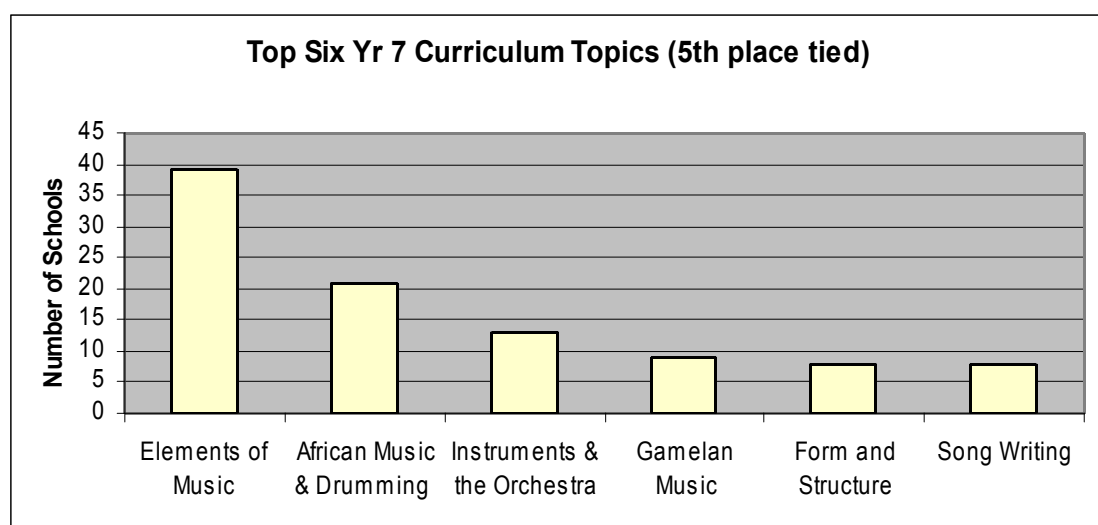
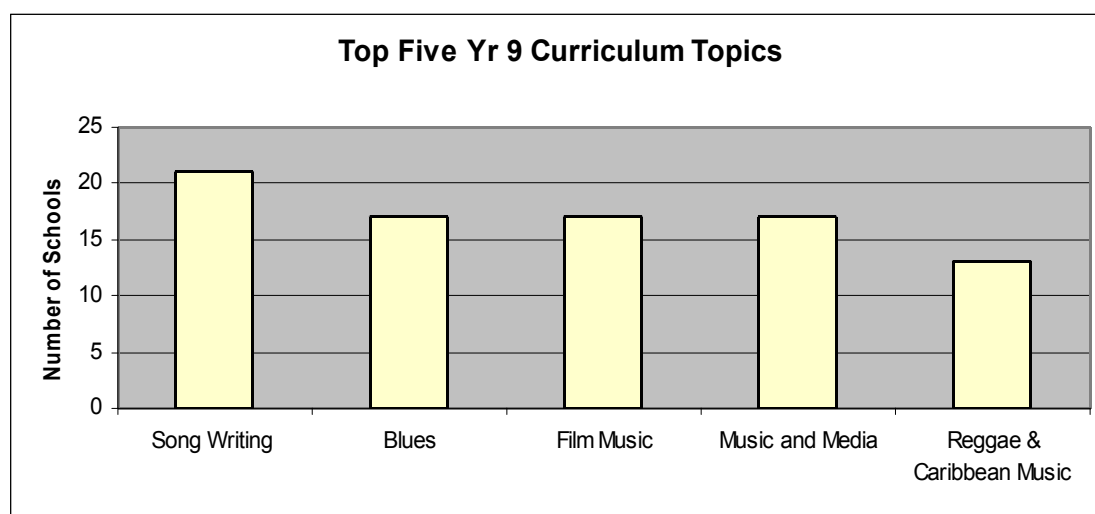


Figure 5: Chart showing most popular Year 7 curriculum topics across 78 schools in study



Many traditional and formal themes emanating from the powerful influence of the Western canon were in evidence, especially emphasising such skills as learning about musical elements, melody writing, form/structure and instrumental recognition. Nevertheless a few unusual programmes were also apparent such as ‘Learning to play in a live band’, ‘Musical cliché’, ‘Guitar gym’ and ‘Asian dance fusions’.

#### 4.412 Year 9



**Figure 6: Chart showing most popular Year 9 curriculum topics across 78 schools in study**

Year 9 popular topics also included song writing and world musics. Nevertheless programmes were diverse and potentially more tailor-made for pupils’ interests when compared to those listed for Year 7 within the same departments. They included such diverse topics as ‘America’, ‘China & Us’, ‘Balkan music’, ‘DJ-ing’ and ‘Bollywood’. It should also be noted that 10 departments had left behind KS3 music by the time students began Year 9; either entire year groups had embarked upon music courses that awarded certification (e.g. BTEC/NCFE) or individuals had already chosen GCSE/BTEC pathways (in which case many were no longer accessing the music curriculum at all unless they had opted for the subject).

To summarise, it appeared that many departments began their KS3 courses in similar manners, drawing upon common strands in order to provide pupils with the basic skills required for an appreciation of music deriving from the Western canonic tradition. Although some continued in this vein throughout KS3, others widened their

remit enormously. Unfortunately it was not possible to deduce from the data whether this diversification was pupil-driven or teacher-led however it is hypothesised, according to personal experience and observations in the focus schools, that students' progressive disengagement with the more traditional aspects of the curriculum may have been the catalyst for change.

#### **4.5 Curriculum and Pedagogy in the Focus Schools**

There now follows a brief overview of each of the three departments' KS3 courses. Information was obtained from a mixture of documentary and observational evidence as collected during fieldwork.

##### *4.51 Suburban Street*

The KS3 course in this department consisted of individual and group instrumental work alongside the use of computers in both performance and composition tasks; progress was monitored via a mix of self, peer and teacher assessment. An emphasis was placed upon developing aural and practical skills rather than notational success although equally this was not discouraged. Meanwhile there was a clear integration of various musical activities in lessons; despite the computer-based nature of those observed, listening, singing back, playing, composing, reviewing and peer evaluation were also seen.

Departmental documentation stated that in some projects (such as 'Performing in a live band' and 'Live band covers') pupils had free choice in terms of the sorts of music that they wished to engage in. This meant that they could bring personal musical preferences and ways of working into the classroom arena for performance and composition purposes, much in the manner of the Musical Futures ethos (although no lessons in which students worked in completely informal ways were observed during the fieldwork). Overall, curriculum and pedagogy appeared predominantly masculine-gendered in construction due to an emphasis upon technology, composing, performing in popular genres and informal engagement. As a consequence it appeared likely that many boys would be attracted to studying music at KS4.

#### *4.52 Seaside Town*

The KS3 course in this department (for Years 7 and 8) lacked much technological input although it was practically orientated in terms of using of real instruments in its delivery. As in Suburban Street there was no emphasis upon notational acquisition as a precursor for achievement whilst there were opportunities for self and peer reflection within each project. However a dearth of KS3 technological opportunities, despite the favourable departmental facilities in evidence, appeared to prevent many pupils from enjoying classroom music as much as they might, but potentially more boys due to their known preferences in this area (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).

Activities were explored via conventional means, such as playing tuned percussion in traditionally-orientated topic areas (e.g. 'Pulse and rhythm', 'Making Music for adverts', 'Blues'). Lessons were primarily very teacher-directed however, having little room for the exploitation of pupils' personal choices and interests. Overall there was a predominance of feminine-gendered factors in operation at KS3; despite the lack of emphasis upon learning notation (a masculine-gendered feature), the employment of over-structured activities, using traditional non-electronic classroom instruments (except keyboards), and a severe lack of technological input, ensured this outcome. As a consequence it appeared likely that more girls than boys would wish to engage at KS4.

#### *4.53 Rural Country*

A very tightly structured programme of study was in evidence across the KS3 years in this department. Lessons throughout Years 7 and 8 were mostly based upon individual learning, using two sequential and progressively challenging project books that had been developed by the HoD. Book 1 began with a unit on sounds and signs, moving on to pulse, rhythm & structure, pitch, rondo and dynamics. Book 2 included units on ostinati, the national anthem, scales, triads, the F clef, score reading and composing with chords. They also contained sections including a learning diary, vocabulary list, national curriculum levels, plus performance and listening logs (but notably none for composition).

Pupils were expected to work through the booklets at their own pace, both self-assessing and being assessed on key tasks by the class teacher. When successfully

completed these were signed off, enabling the pupil to move on to the next. However failure meant repetition of the assignment until deemed satisfactorily executed. National curriculum levels were attached to each activity ensuring that pupils were constantly aware of their current standards compared to expected averages. The tasks were extremely performance focused (primarily with the electric keyboard in mind) and emphasised the acquisition of notation. Specific listening assignments were related to topics however composition was mostly limited to pupils completing and notating answering phrases to musical questions. Paired activities were in evidence but no large-scale group work. It was clear (from observations) that many children did not complete the books by the end of Year 8 but those advanced instrumentalists who sped through them (due to externally acquired knowledge) received preferential treatment, being allowed to both compose music for their instruments or learn the basics of the Sibelius programme on the few classroom computers.

There was a change in direction in Year 9 in that the units became thematically based, involved lots of group work and focused upon some mainstream world and popular styles such as blues, rock and reggae. However activities continued to be highly teacher-directed whilst musical performance opportunities remained extremely notation-orientated. These units thus seemed to be little more than placatory carrots for those students who were potentially becoming increasingly disenchanted with school music. Overall this KS3 course was extremely feminine-gendered in its construction, particularly through its emphasis upon notation skills and classical music (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). As a consequence it was hypothesised that girls would be more attracted to studying music at KS4.

#### **4.6 Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has reviewed key aspects of quantitative data outcomes from this study and where appropriate compared and contrasted them with those from L Green's study. It has also summarised the developments and changes in curriculum and pedagogy in the English system of music education and where appropriate, related current findings to these. The main outcomes concerning gender and musical activities suggested that:

- The majority of current teachers (as in 1993) believed that boys and girls were equally successful in all musical activities (except singing in which respondents from both data sets strongly believed girls to be more prolific). However many

confirmed, via supporting statements (as in the 1993 study) that methods of achieving success varied enormously according to gender. Their responses thus primarily emphasised the notion of girls and boys being ‘the same but different’.

- Outcomes regarding singing and using notation were almost identical in both data sets in that around four-fifths of respondents regarded girls as being more successful in singing whilst a substantial minority, of approximately one third, believed girls to be more successful in using notation. Reasons for this will be explored in future chapters however their constancy appears interesting in the light of the rapid developments and changes having taken place in many current departments’ resources, curricula and pedagogies (and as evidenced by data supplied by participants).
- In marked contrast, statistical analysis of the data sets concerning teachers’ views about pupils and instrumental performing revealed notable differences and suggested that shifts in beliefs had occurred between surveys. In the current study, greater overall equity was now apparent since the number of those believing girls to be more successful had significantly reduced whilst those believing boys to be likewise had notably increased. Reasons for this will be explored in Chapter 6 however I would suggest that this is primarily the result of boys’ preferred instrumental practices (especially those involving popular music) being both better understood and validated by teachers nowadays.
- Outcomes concerning perceptions about gendered success in composing and listening/appraising activities, revealed that beliefs had not changed significantly between the surveys since similar minorities of teachers in both data sets suggested that composing was more masculine-gendered, and listening/appraising more feminine-gendered. However numbers currently believing so had roughly doubled (in both cases) when compared to the 1993 data. Although statistical analysis did not confirm that these changes could be construed as significant, the outcomes substantiate the notion that gendered beliefs have remained relatively stable despite the aforementioned changes in departmental resourcing and practices during the intervening years.
- Additional data from the current study indicated that some teachers perceived changes in pupils’ preferences towards activities across the years of KS3. In particular they suggested that singing gradually becoming more feminine-gendered and composing using technology more masculine-gendered.

Findings concerning musical genres and gender engagement suggested that:

- Most current respondents (as in 1993) believed that boys and girls were equally accepting of the four, key musical genres although many later confirmed in their explanations (as in the 1993 study) that ways of engaging varied enormously according to gender. Once again they emphasised the idea of ‘the same but different’.
- A substantial minority of current respondents (nearly one third) supported the notion that girls engaged better with classical music, a total that had slightly increased when compared with 1993 outcomes. However a far smaller group (of just six individuals) suggested that boys engaged better with popular musics, this number having halved when compared to the earlier survey. Further statistical analysis revealed that these slight changes were not of particular significance and thus suggests that teachers’ views about girls’ and boys’ engagement with classical and pop musics have remained fairly static across the interim period between surveys. Once again this constancy is set against the corresponding changes in departmental resourcing, curriculum and pedagogy.
- A number of teachers (11) in the current survey believed that boys engaged better with world musics as compared to just one in 1993 and statistical analysis confirmed that this change was significant. Reasons for this situation will be explored in Chapter 9 however I would suggest that it can be explained by the growth in many teachers’ familiarity with these genres nowadays. Their increased likelihood of using appropriate oral-aural pedagogies may also have particular significance, since informal ways of learning are known to be factors in improving boys’ engagement (Green 2002a, 2006, 2008, Hallam et al., 2011).
- Additional data from the current study indicated that most KS3 topics experienced by Year 7 students were very traditional in content, being dominated by the conventional basics of musical instruction as exemplified in the Western canon. However by Year 9 many departments had shifted their focus towards more pupil-centred interests and needs, therefore topics were far more diverse. It is hypothesised that these changes may be instigated by teachers as a result of the substantial numbers of pupils that gradually disengage with the subject across KS3 (and as evidenced in this study), whilst becoming vociferous in their demands to study musics that they find more relevant and interesting.

In terms of the observable elements of the curricula and pedagogies in operation in the focus schools, findings showed that:

- The departments had diverse KS3 courses on offer and the strategies of their dissemination were extremely varied. This demonstrates how different each pupil's musical experiences can be, despite the over-arching dictates of the National Curriculum.
- The power of the HoD seemed undeniable in all three schools since KS3 courses appeared primarily based upon their interests and philosophies. Despite the wide range of skills and interests exhibited by other departmental staff, it was apparent, especially in Seaside Town and Rural Country, that these qualities were not always exploited in the interests of all KS3 pupils' needs.
- Suburban Street had the most contemporary curriculum programmes and pedagogical strategies in evidence, whilst Seaside Town utilised far more conventional topics and procedures at KS3 (if far less so at KS4). Meanwhile Rural Country was by far the least progressive and most traditional in almost every aspect of curriculum and pedagogy. As a consequence it was hypothesised that the more masculine-gendered department at Suburban Street would most likely encourage boys to continue to pursue music at KS4, whereas Seaside Town would be rather less likely to do so, and Rural Country the least likely.

## **Chapter 5: Boys' and Girls' Musical Attributes**

This chapter focuses upon two specific themes regarding students' engagement with music: the commonly perceived attributes that are collectively ascribed to girls and boys, both positively and negatively affecting their relationship with the subject; and the levels of enjoyment that students are seen to exhibit when participating. The notion of music is predominantly an holistic one for the purposes of this chapter; consideration of how girls and boys respond very differently to the many disciplines and genres of which the music curriculum is comprised, is investigated across Chapters 6-11.

### **5.1 What are the Perceived Musical Attributes of Boys and Girls?**

As L. Green's research took place in a similar school setting it is a useful starting point when examining the key differences between how girls and boys are understood to relate to school music. From data collected via the 1993 questionnaire and later observations and interviews (1997) she concluded that:

- Girls were predominantly seen as vocalists and instrumental performers, particularly on orchestral and keyboard instruments, whilst they also volunteered in large numbers for extra-curricular activities including those involving classical music. Boys were generally recognised as being negatively disposed towards singing, playing gentler and higher-pitched instruments, using notation and performing or listening to classical music. They were also mostly regarded as reticent about engaging in musical extra-curricular activities, with many preferring sport in this respect.
- Girls were mainly described as being co-operative, mature, open-minded, reliable, conscientious and hard-working. Boys were identified as being more disruptive, inclined to mess around, unwilling to complete tasks and reticent to take part in activities that they considered 'un-macho'.
- However in composing, girls were labelled as conservative, over-conformist, timid, unimaginative and thus lacking in the cerebral qualities required for attainment in this area. In contrast boys were understood to be, 'innovative, experimental, creative and non-conformist' (1996: 51) despite appearing reluctant to work diligently or conform to given guidelines and rules.



- In the classroom girls were disinclined to show off, often unnecessarily lacking confidence in their abilities. However boys were mostly assertive and extrovert, demonstrating behaviours that bordered on extreme bravado on occasions<sup>25</sup>.
- Peer pressure and the fear of seeming ‘sissy’ to other boys was cited by pupils and teachers alike as a prime reason for many boys’ disengagement with music.

Since research into the innate musical ability of all children indicates that it is similar for both sexes in terms of musical perception and auditory aptitude (Shuter-Dyson & Gabriel, 1981), the very different ways in which these girls and boys were apprehended appears deeply rooted in the social norms that underpin both the gendering of music (see section 1.33) and society at large. In addition there is a striking similarity between perceptions of girls and boys in music (as exemplified by Green’s respondents) and teachers’ beliefs concerning gendered attributes across wider educational contexts (see sections 2.2 and 2.3).

## 5.2 Teachers on Pupils’ Gendered Attributes and their Outcomes

Although teachers in this study were not asked to identify boys’ and girls’ musical attributes their opinions naturally emerged during responses regarding other matters. Indeed 128 remarks were made, 63 referring to boys and 65 to girls, and most shared a discourse of oppositional, binary imagery (Allard, 2004, Francis, 2006, Ivinson & Murphy, 2006, Paechter, 2006a, 2007) describing boys as ‘like this’ but girls as ‘like that’. Many current respondents’ comments were so similar to those expressed in L. Green’s study that examples from both data sets sit alongside each other (L. Green’s are shown in bracketed italics). Due to the constraints of the word count, this strategy could not continue across subsequent chapters however I have initially employed it to show the high level of agreement that I believe to exist between the two<sup>26</sup>.

### 5.21 Teachers on Boys’ Attributes

Teachers’ positive comments about boys concurred greatly with those expressed in Green’s study as this sample denotes:

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<sup>25</sup> It should also be note that general outcomes emerging from the longitudinal study concerning ‘Musical Futures’ pedagogies suggest that boys display higher levels of confidence than girls when engaging in music-making. For respondents’ comments in this respect see Hallam et al., 2011: 127.

<sup>26</sup> To compare these with further examples from her study see Green, 1997, pp. 158-9 and 172-5.

**School 28:** Boys in my school are more confident in every area...

*[Boys tend to have more confidence and are more willing to 'have a go' (Green, 1997: 173)].*

**School 30:** Boys are generally more creative and will try out ideas.

*[... boys seem to have a greater creative spark than girls (Green, 1997: 197)].*

**School 63:** They like experimenting!

*[Boys are more inclined to experiment... (Green, 1997: 196)].*

**School 55:** Boys are less inhibited.

*[Their work is more extrovert generally... (Green, 1997: 173)].*

Most notably 12 respondents stated that boys were more likely to engage in risk-taking and rule-breaking, attributes which were unanimously presented as being positive:

**School 7:** ...they are reluctant to follow rules... but it often works.

*[Girls are happier to learn systematically the rules and facts. Boys can't be bothered. (Green, 1997: 157)].*

**School 44:** ... in some ways boys are stronger at exploration and risk-taking...

*[Boys are not so afraid to be inventive and experiment. Green, 1997: 197)].*

In terms of negative attributes, teachers described boys as argumentative, prejudiced, peer-pressured, narrow-minded, embarrassed and lacking in concentration.

**School 7:** ... boys have more pre-conceived ideas and won't budge from their niche interests...

*[... boys generally want to do so [perform pop music] exclusively and often have little time for anything else (Green, 1997: 178)].*

**School 40:** Boys find it difficult to concentrate for a long enough time...

*[Sitting still for any length of time is quite hard for most adolescent boys and music is no exception. (Green, 1997: 173)].*

**School 51:** Boys are less open-minded and tolerant...

*[Boys tend to moan and groan at the thought of listening to classical music... (Green, 1997: 177)].*

**School 67:** Boys are reluctant to try...

*[Boys on the whole tend to give up much more easily (Green, 1997: 226)].*

**School 71:** It's all about peer pressure with boys.

*[There is much peer pressure amongst boys that music has a 'cissy' stigma (Green, 1997: 171)].*

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Boys argue with each other more...

*[Rivalry exists between boys a lot more... (Green, 1997: 177)].*

**School 76:** Boys are embarrassed...

*[Boys... seem to be more self-conscious than girls... (Green, 1997: 171)].*

One also identified the transfer from primary school as being a problematic time:

**School 77:** Many pupils, but most particularly boys, stop participating when they come up to us from junior school, if not before that in many cases.

*[Boys have generally acquired less skills... at junior schools... consequently their motivation is poor (Green, 1997: 173)].*

As reported in section 2.2 research indicates that boys, of all ages and across a range of subjects, tend to be perceived by teachers as more problematic. However such generalisations ignore the fact that their behaviour and motivation can vary enormously according to the activities in which they engage, whilst a restrictive peer culture might negatively affect some boys but certainly not all. Meanwhile, research outcomes from the Musical Futures programme indicate that the majority of participating teachers (89%) believed it to promote positivity towards music amongst those students who consistently behaved poorly in other lessons (Hallam et al., 2011). Since boys' unsatisfactory behaviour was of primary concern to L. Green's respondents (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) it appears that Musical Futures has many benefits in this respect; in

fact I would suggest that its boy-friendly content and pedagogical approaches are the reasons for this favourable effect.

Despite many participants in the current survey suggesting that boys were frequently naughty, they often counteracted this by indicating that disobedience could be tolerated, or even viewed as a positive quality, if it enabled the spark of independent and creative thinking from which brilliance, or indeed genius, could potentially emerge:

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Boys fight because they all want to be in control and they all think that they've got better ideas than each other... but from this can come some really good stuff.

*[Boys operate at the extremes. Their work is more extrovert generally but they do tend to misbehave more (Green, 1997: 173)].*

Green suggests that this linking of boys' outward failure with their presupposed inward success is further evidence of the over-arching masculine delineation of music at work (1997: 200). Meanwhile five current respondents argued that gender-related success in music gradually changed with age; with boys' confidence and standards improving so markedly as they matured, that they outstripped those of girls by KS4:

**School 12:** Girls are better at KS3 level – more successful at working in groups, managing their time and producing work that meets the requirements of the task. However at GCSE boys tend to outperform the girls perhaps because they are more inclined to use technology well.

*[In the lower school groups (Years 7-9) there is quite a balance in terms of music achievement... But very definitely in Years 10 and 11 it is the boys who are the highest achievers... (Green, 1997: 226)].*

**School 17:** Lower down in the school I would say girls are better (at music) but further up, boys seem to overtake.

*[Although more girls in the upper years study music, much of the creative, adventurous composing comes from boys (Green, 1997: 197)].*

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Boys are very haphazard in the earlier years – they don't follow technique/rules they just want to play and they like making noise

but this declines with age. Girls are perfectionists, especially as they get older—they want it to get to get it right and if they can't they won't play in front of others at all. Even the biggest divas like to hide behind others when it comes to insecurities surrounding public performance.

Ironically this perception of boys' superior ability is not up-held by any of the published data concerning KS4 outcomes (as formerly outlined in section 1.11). Slippage between beliefs and hard evidence is thus likely to be a result of, 'the transparent masculine delineation of music that imbues our musical experiences' (Green, 1997: 228). In essence the notion that boys are unquestionably superior in all musical activities (and not just in the male-dominated discipline of composition) functions as a universal truth despite plenty of concrete evidence to the contrary.

#### *5.22 Teachers on Girls' Attributes*

In marked contrast and in agreement with Green's earlier study, girls were mostly described in positive terms by the respondents as this sample of statements reveal:

**School 8:** Girls are better at organising themselves...

*[Girls... apply themselves to practice, more organised... (Green, 1997: 155)].*

**School 20:** Girls are less affected by peer pressure.

*[Less peer pressure on girls (Green, 1997: 169)].*

**School 29:** Girls show greater patience over all.

*[Boys often don't have the patience to listen carefully and often think that they already know it all (Green, 1997: 173)].*

**School 32:** Girls tend to give more attention to detail and have better attention spans.

*[They seem to find it easier to concentrate and think more carefully about presentation of ideas (Green, 1997: 157)].*

**School 44:** They have dedication and perseverance... girls show the required

concentration and motivation to learn... they don't expect it to be easy first off.  
*[They seem to persevere more. Stickability! (Green, 1997: 156)].*

**School 54:** Girls are more thoughtful and generally tolerant...  
*(They are more tolerant and understanding (Green, 1997: 173)].*

**School 75:** Girls are more psychologically mature to deal with music at this time of their lives...  
*[Girls mature earlier and have a corresponding commitment to their work (Green, 1997: 156)].*

However, unlike many of those respondents promoting boys' positive qualities, only two suggested that girls' favourable attributes could also lead to them producing higher quality work:

**School 44:**... girls can generally cope with more freedom and use it as an pleasing artistic outlet.

**School 36:** Girls are able to focus on tasks that are more creative. They like to experiment with sounds and they are more able to structure musical phrases.

Girls' negatively perceived traits were not centred around behavioural issues, laziness or non-compliance but about a lack of innovation and spontaneity alongside a tendency for over-perfectionism:

**School 63:** Girls tend to prefer 'rules' and like to stick to what they know.  
*[ Girls tend to stick to set forms (Green, 1997: 197)]*

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls play it safe... they like constraints rather than complete freedom... girls are more perfectionist – they want to get it right...  
*[Girls tend to be more traditional and conservative... (Green, 1997: 197)].*

**School 75:** Girls are reluctant to try improvisation whilst boys are more adventurous and succeed.

*[The boys do well using an improvisatory approach... The girls work more methodically and like writing things down (Green, 1997: 197)].*

In essence, many respondents postulated that although girls worked harder and behaved better in music, they did not necessarily produce superior outcomes; their work might fulfil a given brief but was seen, all too often, as lacking the necessary excitement, spontaneity and innovation when compared to that of boys'. Once again these comments resonated with those expressed by teachers across broader educational contexts (see section 2.2). The following comments from both surveys succinctly sum up these different perceptions of boys and girls:

***School 73 (Seaside Town):*** At KS3 girls plug away and achieve well... their confidence levels are lower but their work is technically better than that of the boys. Many boys are the complete reverse – they are often technically inept but appear confident and most are willing to get out of their apparent comfort zones, sometimes to produce something really interesting.

*[It is my experience that girls are better when it comes to exercises... and getting down to work, but quite a few of the boys show imagination and ability (Green, 1997: 197)].*

The preponderance of such comments suggests a conundrum in many teachers' thinking about girls and musical excellence; on the one hand they encourage them to develop a set of positively perceived attributes such as diligence, co-operation and perseverance but on the other, they do not believe that these will contribute to the production of superior musical outcomes. Meanwhile there is little evidence to suggest that most teachers inspire girls to develop those attributes that apparently make boys more successful. Hard data suggests that girls' practices *are* likely to assist them in achieving higher standards however (as evidenced by recent KS4 results (DfE, 2013, Edexcel, 2013)) but many teachers remain blind to this. Once again the power of the masculine delineation of music appears to be at work here, interrupting the ability of these respondents to see beyond its influence.

Even amongst the handful of teachers who argued that girls were more musically able, the skills that they possessed, and consequently the areas in which they were deemed successful, were very different to those of their male counterparts. In particular

it was girls' general academic competencies that allowed for success (most notably as applied in listening and appraising tasks) rather than innate musicality;

**School 56:** Girls generally achieve better results in tests and classroom assessments due to superior literacy issues.

*Girls are more interested in writing things down and getting it right (Green, 1997: 173)].*

Although the 78 teachers involved in the survey were not directly asked to comment about general pupil behaviour, none suggested that there were any such problems from girls in music lessons (unlike boys). Nevertheless two interviewed teachers did make specific reference to girls' less than perfect conduct in class:

**Ms Renton (Seaside Town):** Girls are different and fall into two types: either they want to get it right and to please you by trying to incorporate previous learning and so on; or else they're switched off and will do absolutely nothing as they're more interested in the social aspects of their life rather than being creative. Girls are of two types – completely meticulous or don't give a damn.

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** I suppose that the girls are better behaved at times... perhaps more docile... but women of a young age are asserting themselves more and more than they used to... not necessarily to their advantage... so there's very definitely been a change... what you do find is that when they come in at Year 7 they are far more confident these days... that confidence is quite often misplaced... the 'We were wonderful at music in junior school and will continue being wonderful' attitude... they transfer to secondary school and think that they can continue to be the same.

This final comment not only displays an undercurrent of outrage that girls' behaviour is apparently changing and indeed emulating that of boys' (Paechter 2007, Ringrose, 2007, Skelton, 2010, Skelton et al., 2012) (note that there is no parallel criticism of boys in this respect) but also provides further insights into how gendered traditions impinge upon individual thought. Indeed the respondent implies that girls' apparent greater musical success in earlier childhood automatically abates during adolescence, naturally



and inevitably giving way to boys' emerging musical superiority. Yet again this complies with Green's idea that the, 'overriding sway of the masculine delineation of music' (1997: 229) asserts itself increasingly during the secondary years.

### **5.3 Pupils on Gendered Attributes and their Outcomes**

Pupils had plenty to say about their own and each other's attributes and behaviours although girls spoke more about boys than themselves. Comments were also predominantly from KS3 students whilst those from KS4 were commonly made by the Year 9 students from Seaside Town. One might hypothesise therefore that the beliefs and behaviours of girls and boys in music become less differentiated as they develop greater maturity whilst becoming part of a like-minded group of people opting to study music.

#### *5.31 Pupils on Boys' Attributes*

Of the 83 remarks about boys, only 30 came from the boys themselves. The general consensus was that they believed themselves to be lazy and disobedient, having a laid back attitude towards a subject that, for most, held little importance. Their views have much in common with those expressed by interviewees in other studies concerning young masculinities (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003) where boys predominantly defined themselves in terms of their 'differences' from girls. Inevitably this stance also necessitates the avoidance of any behaviours perceived as female-orientated (participation in music being an issue here due to its history of feminisation).

In the current study boys frequently described their intention to 'have a laugh' and 'wind people up' during lessons and blamed their misbehaviour upon boredom and a need for excitement and stimulation:

#### ***Suburban Street Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Sam:** Girls pay more attention to it and boys just... don't do anything basically...

**Leroy:** Yeah... we don't take it seriously... like if you put boys and girls together we just have a laugh and the girls get really annoyed...

***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Ben:** Sometimes... because the boys get bored they behave a little bit worse... we start turning round...

**Lewis:** ... quietly going on the keyboards or something...

**Jake:** ... and then we get sent out... it's 'cos boys are more active... and if they don't like something they'll say...

**Joe (Rural Country/Yr9):** Boys think music... is a bit of a doss (easy) lesson... and so they muck about in it.

It even seemed acceptable for musically able boys to indulge in such behaviours (perhaps as a way of appeasing the majority of the peer group by being 'one of the lads'):

***Suburban Street Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Karl:** Boys are worse... they muck about... however much they like music...

**Darren:** There's someone in class who's Grade 6 violin and he's still messing about...

Classroom observations certainly revealed disruptive behaviour to be the prerogative of boys as the following extract reveals:

***Diary extract: Seaside Town Year 7 observation***

**2.20:** Most pupils choose and collect instruments responsibly although it is noticeable that Philip grabs a cabasa and starts to hurl it around whilst Declan smashes a xylophone with his fists. They are given a verbal warning about their behaviour and momentarily calm down.

**2.43 onwards:** The boys continue to misbehave throughout pupils' group performances; Philip constantly bashes the side of a xylophone with a beater whilst Declan spins on his chair. As Philip is so fidgety the HoD suggests that he takes the video camera and records the next group; he appears excited about doing this. Unfortunately Philip is silly and distracted whilst making the recording and when the HoD realises that he has filmed the wall rather than the group playing she takes the camera off him.

**3.01:** Mayhem breaks out at the end of the lesson. Although many students put their instruments away efficiently, if noisily, Philip bashes pupils on the head with a beater whilst spinning wildly on his chair. Meanwhile Declan hides an instrument in a cupboard although he is quickly hauled out by other pupils who are putting things away.

**3.04:** Philip is now on the floor trying to take apart the base of his chair. The HoD asks to see those on behaviour report and signals that the rest may go. Declan attempts to run out of the classroom but is quickly apprehended.

Like those girls interviewed by Frosh et al., (2003), the 53 partaking in this study also constructed oppositional binary imagery of gender. They suggested that a straightforward clash occurred between ‘good’ girls and ‘bad’ boys and thus denied the range of gendered behaviours that might normally exist in the classroom (Dillabough et al., 2006, Frances, 2010, Paechter, 2006c, 2012). They generally agreed that boys were non-conformist, experimental, openly disobedient, lazy and showed little respect for the subject. Many expressed annoyance at boys’ behaviour which they found childish:

***Suburban Street Year 7 girls’ discussion***

**Sophie:** We tell them ‘don’t do that any more’ but they won’t listen...

**Mercy:** ... they can’t stop distracting one another...

**Keisha:** ... they don’t know how to control themselves... or act sensibly in lessons...

**Gemma:** ... they think that it’s just a chance to do weird stuff and make up strange music... and they don’t really do anything...

**Keisha:** ... they just want to mess about on the drums and stuff like that.

***Rural Country Year 9 girls’ discussion***

**Emma:** Well the teachers can’t really get control of them and then they think that they’re winning all the way and they do stupid stuff again and again...

**Charlotte:** ... also when they record sometimes, they get really muddled up...

**Emma:** ... because they haven’t been practising... (*All chorus ‘Yeah’.*)

**Jess:** I think most of them think it’s a doss (easy) lesson... you don’t have to do much...

**Rosie:** ‘Cos none of them really like music... so they just kind of mess around.

Only three girls suggested that boys' misbehaviour stemmed from their greater dislike of an imposed curriculum and a lack of suitable challenges. (How girls and boys relate to informal and formal aspects of musical learning will be fully examined in Chapter 6.)

**Lisa (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... I think that the majority of them prefer to make stuff up themselves rather than do what the teacher says... because they find that all a bit easy... they muck around...

**Chanel (Seaside Town/Yr7):** If you give the boys one of them little things (*she means glockenspiels*) they'll be happy when they start playing but then they get told off because they keep playing at the wrong times... they show they're bored more than us ...

Indeed, classroom observations in both Rural Country and Seaside Town revealed unchallenging or inappropriate work to be a primary cause of poor behaviour in *all* students, but more noticeably in boys who expressed their frustrations more openly and often at length. However this situation could be turned around quite spectacularly through the provision of greater musical challenges, especially those involving the instruments and informal practices of popular musics (Green 2002a, 2006, 2008), as the following extract reveals:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 9 observation***

**9.25:** I visit Group G, consisting of three girls (on flute, xylophone and electric piano) and two boys (on maracas and bongos). The maracas player is just messing around; he is not really trying to fit in to the ensemble and is hell bent on making a racket – to the annoyance of the girls, who are trying to remain patient with him. I later find out that he is currently on report for poor behaviour in lessons generally.

**9.47:** I return to group G and find the HoD showing the boy, who was formerly messing about, how to play the bass line on a bass guitar. He is learning the part by rote and has made a confident start. Indeed he hardly looks like the same pupil; he is totally engaged, quite obviously taking his role seriously, and there is none of the earlier silly childish behaviour in evidence. I ask him if this is more fun doing this part and he says that it's really good.

One girl implied that peer pressure had a huge effect on boys' behaviour (Renold, 2001, Keddie & Mills, 2007, Paechter, 2012) :

**Keisha (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I think that many of them can do the work but because some of their friends don't, they just want to mess about on the drums and stuff like that. Some of them... because their friends are acting bored... just sit there and don't do anything...

Several others also indicated that working with boys hindered their own success in the subject whilst confirming that boys were less likely to take the work seriously:

***Suburban Street Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Sophie:** ... they say 'we need to practice' at the last minute... and when we play it really slowly for them they're useless 'cos they've been messing around...

**Gemma:** ... and doing their own thing...

**Sophie:** ... when we want to go on further they're still at stage one...

The following informal discussion with a group during a Year 9 lesson certainly demonstrated how negatively some girls felt about having to work with boys:

***Rural Country Year 9 girls' discussion***

**AG:** Do you ever work with boys in your groups?

**Millie:** Sometimes.

**AG:** (to Lizzy) You're turning your nose up, why?

**Lizzy:** Well we wouldn't with him! (*Points to Alexander who has entered.*)

**AG:** Ignore particular individuals... I mean boys in general.

**Millie:** Well we don't always want to because they don't really work as well...

**AG:** (*To Alexander*) Would you agree that that's true about boys?

**Alexander:** Yes it is really.

**Katrina:** ... and they're always messing around...

**AG:** (*To the girls*) So you end up...

**Alexander:** ... they get annoyed with us.

**AG:** Would it be better if girls and boys mixed – would you get better results?

**Katrina:** We'd argue more!

**Alexander:** Yes we'd definitely argue more...

**Lizzy:** Argue and waste time...

**Millie:** Basically, without boys we get a lot more done...

Just two girls suggested that some boys displayed appropriate behaviour in the subject:

**Charlotte: (Rural Country/Yr9)** I think that a few make an effort... those who are going to take it for GCSE or something...

At KS4 only seven girls commented on boys' behaviour, and all were Year 9 pupils at Seaside Town (and at least a year younger than their counterparts in the other schools). They indicated that boys were more likely to be disruptive and rule-breaking even in exam courses:

***Seaside Town BTEC girls' discussion***

**Alicia:** Boys are quite different... I don't know... it's how they act really...

**Melissa:** ... some of them can be really lazy too...

**Courtney:** They are really annoying... sometimes they take our equipment and they won't give it back... they're just annoying... messing around... boys don't like doing the same things as girls... we are generally more quiet... well sometimes... and we get on with the work.

**Beneasha:** In some ways they are different but in others very similar... they prefer to be really noisy but they can be quiet and do the work that's asked for...

***Seaside Town BTEC girls' discussion***

**Marion:** I'm not sure that many of them really take it seriously... and a lot of them get quite aggressive at times...

**Paula:** ... they just play and play... you can never hear what you're supposed to be doing... at the moment there's a couple of boys who work in the room where the drum kit is... and well all I've got is my guitar... not plugged in... and all you can hear is those drums... (*voice becomes noticeably angry*) and they want the door open... they want it *loud*... they won't even attempt to turn the volume down a bit...so you can't concentrate on what you're trying to play... you're trying to learn something and they're just banging away on the drums...

Only five girls suggested that behavioural problems were not gender-related and more likely caused by *any* student who lacked motivation or interest in the subject:

***Rural Country Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Jenny:** I wouldn't say that it's boys versus girls because some boys are really good at music... it's about whether they like music or not.

**Grace:** Yeah I think the more talented boys are really quite good and get down to stuff... same with the girls... but the people, boys and girls, who aren't as good, or find it hard... then they find music lessons a time to chat and muck around and be silly...

***Seaside Town Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Olivia:** We're all the same... 'cos everyone is bored...

**Sadie:** Yes, everyone is quite bored in music...

**Sheryl:** That's why we all play around a bit and people get verbal warnings...

**Olivia:** If it was more fun then we'd probably be... always doing something...

**Sheryl:** ... and you'd have good behaviour...

**Olivia:** Everyone is misbehaving because they haven't got anything to concentrate on...

Meanwhile a thoughtful statement was made by one girl who noticed the change in certain boys' behaviours across different curriculum areas, thus supporting the idea that it is very much determined by levels of enthusiasm and motivation:

**Marion (Suburban Street/BTEC):** A couple of the boys... well I'm with them in other lessons and they just sit there in class and they won't do anything... but in music they get really involved... in a discussion too... but when they go to the next lesson they'll go straight back as before... not wanting to do anything and being stroppy (angry)...

***5.32 Pupils on Girls' Attributes***

Whilst just 27 of the girls commented upon their own behaviour, 32 boys contributed to the discussion. The girls mostly portrayed themselves as reasonably hard-working, quite

well-behaved, compliant to teachers' wishes and possessing a far more mature attitude towards the subject than their male counterparts.

**Martha (Suburban Street/Yr9):** The girls definitely listen and do more...

**Sarah (Rural Country/Yr9):** ... girls get on with work and don't mess about.

**Poppy (Rural Country/Yr7):** ... we put our hands up and answer questions...

One also indicated that girls were easily able to take control of these situations when working with boys:

**Chanel (Seaside Town/Yr7):** The girls are a bit more controlling and bossy because... if we get paired up with a boy then obviously we want to be in charge... sometimes some of them like to but mostly they say 'Yeah, whatever'.

Nevertheless around half of the girls admitted that they were somewhat chatty and unfocused in lessons although this only caused a low level of disruption since, unlike the boys, they knew when to cease and listen to the teacher:

**Mercy (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I mean I'm not that well behaved personally but I know when to stop... they go over the top...

#### ***Suburban Street Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Amy:** Yeah, the girls do more what the teacher is asking for... I dunno... girls chat more... the girls chat and the boys mess about...

**Kerry:** ... I do think that girls and boys behave differently in music... girls talk but boys shout...

**Martha:** All the girls are always chatting and getting in trouble too...

**Amy:** ... yeah we both get into trouble but for different things.

#### ***Seaside Town Year 7 girls' discussion***

**AG:** Do the girls never do any bad things when they're bored?

**Diana:** Some girls... well one I know... makes faces and says some silly



things... but definitely... it's more boys in general... (*Murmurs of agreement from others.*)

**Olivia:** I do play the keyboard when I'm not supposed to but it'll have no volume so she (*the teacher*) doesn't know I'm doing it...

**Sheryl:** Boys get caught more...

**Sadie:** Girls are more clever at not getting caught...

**Olivia:** ... yeah, sneaky...

Boys' views about girls were less homogeneous and fell into two opposing camps. Some argued that they were far better behaved in music because they had a greater liking for the subject (although girls in the study revealed no evidence of this):

**Joe (Rural Country/Yr9):** Well, I think that in some aspects things that are different... because usually the girls get on with it...

**Sam (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Girls pay more attention ... Girls are so straight in music but boys have fun...

***Rural Country Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Chris:** It's mostly girls that do the work...

**Jonathan:** ... there's about seven or eight girls in the class that do everything... they're on task all the time... the teacher always visits them to see how they are doing... before anyone else... and they're all girls... and it gets a bit annoying.

**Harry:** Girls do a lot more of the work...

The following informal discussion during a Year 9 lesson further substantiated this:

***Rural Country Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Peter:** Basically girls are better than boys in lots of ways... they can concentrate.

**AG:** But if there were girls in your group do you think your end results would be better – the work that you produce?

**Liam:** Well it would be better in some ways because they'd organise us properly and stop us messing about.

Other boys stated that girls were just as badly behaved however they were less openly disobedient and more covert in their insubordination:

**Reece (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Girls like sit there and talk too... and pretend to be getting on with it...

**Nat (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I find some of the girls... chatty and they don't show as much respect for the teachers as they should...

***Seaside Town Year 8 boys' discussion***

**Jordan:** Girls always moan about everything... they speak but they always get away with it.

**Dwight:** They're bitchy... they're so bossy... they talk lots too...

**Jordan:** ... but we always get told off for it...

**Dwight:** If we start talking they grass us up (*tell on us*)... we get into trouble...

The view that girls are more subtle in their behaviour was certainly borne out in several of the lesson observations in Rural Country as the following extract shows:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

I notice that the majority of the class are now off task. Most of the girls are just quietly chatting but some boys begin to get out of seats to play-fight, hitting each other with beaters. There is lots of messing about with the instruments; running pens up and down the xylophones, using the wrong ends of beaters and so on. Eventually the noise gets unbearable and the HoD yells at them.

Several boys were accurate in their perceptions concerning girls' dislike of and lack of confidence in, public performance as the following exchange reveals:

***Suburban Street : Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Nat:** ... the girls get more embarrassed when they show their work...

**Darren:** Yeah... we don't really care as much...

**Nat:** ... We're a bit more confident and don't get embarrassed as much...

**Darren:** ... but I think that there are some girls in the class who are confident...

At KS4 the majority of boys comments were from Seaside Town and agreed that girls were better behaved when it came to doing the right thing. However an element of scorn was exhibited by the Year 10 boys towards girls' perceived conformity and conventionality (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997) in the following exchange:

***Seaside Town: BTEC boys' discussion***

**AG:** Do girls like to do the same things as you in music or different?

**Elliot:** Well possibly... but I really don't take much notice of them...

**Cody:** They do criticise a lot... but they don't show it openly...

**Miles:** They show in their body language that they really don't like what you're doing... but they won't voice it. We say openly what we think about them and they obviously don't like it...

**Joseph:** Well girls act up too... but a bit less....

**Cody:** They tell us that we're too loud... so we have to turn it down slightly.

**Aaron:** You can't turn a drum kit down though...

**Miles:** Well the girls always pay attention to everything... usually the girl will take notice and the guy won't really care...

**Cody:** ... that's pretty much true of everything... it's the way the world works.

Just one subtly hinted that girls' confidence levels may be deeply affected by boys' attitudes in examination classes:

**Cody (Seaside Town/BTEC):** A girl who works in our group... she's just worried all the time... that someone is going to have a go at her for her guitar playing... she hardly ever plays it and when she does she plays the totally wrong thing anyway... she thinks that the boys are always gonna put her down...

Girls' low levels confidence was the most commented upon issue by all students with 40 statements referring to it, 32 from girls and eight from boys. (In contrast although various boys said that they were no good at music, not one openly expressed any confidence concerns). In addition, 19 remarks came from Year 9 students, further indicating that some begin to compare themselves unfavourably with peers as KS3 progresses (see Lamont et al., 2003) whilst 14 were from Suburban Street (the school with the highest levels of extra-curricular excellence) and seven from Rural Country

(which also had very good standards in this area). Many of the confidence issues were bound up with open assessment in the classroom and particularly denoted female fear of public failure:

**Stella (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I don't like performing because I get really embarrassed... we have to in front of others and I'm not confident... I dread it.

**Gemma (Suburban Street/Yr7):** No-one has any time to practice and everyone is really stressing out about it... I've got here at ten to eight in the morning to practice, even though I don't really care that much about my grades...

***Suburban Street: Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Lisa:** ... some people are just brilliant and can make up all these good pieces of music and everyone else is just really bad...

**Lydia:** Yeah, you look at yours and you go... oh god I've got to show this to everyone... (*Others chorus in agreement.*)

**Amy:** Then there are the people... well we wouldn't call them favourites... but the people that always get to play... and then it's us lot that always get left out and have to play at the end... and then we sound really bad compared to them.

**Kerry:** Yeah, sometimes it's a bit embarrassing...

***Rural Country Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Emma:** You know, we can play it... but when we come to record it, one of us always messes up... and they (*teachers*) blame it all on us when it's not really our fault 'cos we're nervous. I used to take exams in piano but when I did grade 1... well everyone got really stressed and everything... so I stopped doing them.

At KS4 two GCSE students from Suburban Street indicated feelings inadequacy and poor confidence:

**Stephanie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I think that I really struggle... I'm always having to ask for help. Sometimes it gets really confusing, and when something's not working I think oh my god, here we go again...

**Jasmine (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I nearly dropped music 'cos I thought that everyone was better than me and I didn't have the confidence in terms of knowing what I was doing...

Some Seaside Town girls indicated that boys made them feel either deliberately or unknowingly inferior however a couple disputed this, arguing that the blustering, bravado from boys was possibly a cover for their inadequacies:

***Seaside Town BTEC girls' discussion***

**Hayley:** I think that boys are more confident than girls...

**Alicia:** ... they are a lot more confident than us...

**Jade:** ... but when we get on the stage it's the girls that are more confident...

**Melissa:** Girls have more drive than boys...

**Marion:** Well they either get silly, and laugh or they put you down a bit...

**Primrose:** ... Boys put down your confidence a lot... and criticise all the time...

The notion that boys maintain high levels of confidence, primarily stemming from their greater identification with the prominent roles of the male within with the confines of patriarchal musical history, is certainly a pertinent issue here (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). Meanwhile, although many boys admitted that girls complied with, and consequently achieved, teachers' requirements, only one said that they had greater musical ability.

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... I mean. they (girls) are just more intelligent at music...

Two others indicated that they saw no obvious differences in behaviours:

**Leon (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I think that we're all pretty similar really...

**Kevin (Rural Country/Yr9):** I don't think that it's a boys and girls thing... some people really get on with their work and try hard and then some people, they think... oh music, you don't really do much except the keyboard to muck about on... and they just sit and chat for an hour.

## 5.4 Perceptions of Boys' and Girls' Enjoyment of School Music

The issue of enjoyment in music is a complex one since it became apparent throughout the study that pupils' levels varied enormously from one activity to another, sometimes quite drastically. In addition they appeared closely affected by the gendered expectations that operate widely in schools and beyond; if it is not deemed 'cool' for boys to like singing then it appears that those who do enjoy it will keep quiet for fear that admitting this might prompt bullying. Meanwhile only students with outstanding ability seem to be able to rise above this situation (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).

Research by Lamont et al. (2003) of pupils aged 8-9, 10-12 and 13-14 years, suggested that enjoyment of music lessons mainly declined across time. However the deterioration was far more drastic amongst girls, since 88% expressed enjoyment of lessons in Year 4, but only 58% in Year 9. Boys' interest, although starting from a lower point with only 69% enjoying lessons in Year 4, dropped slightly to 64% in Year 7, but then remained constant through to Year 9.

The fact that more boys than girls of this age expressed enjoyment contradicts other research indicating that KS3 girls maintain better levels of pleasure, interest and confidence (Colley et al., 1994, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Colley & Comber, 2003b, Button, 2006) and could help to explain the rising numbers of boys opting at KS4 (DCFS/DFE 2003-13, Edexcel, 2011-2013). It may also be the result of more departments implementing informal practices at KS3 (known to be popular with boys) since positive responses towards musical learning appear directly related to students' circumstantial autonomy when engaging (Green, 2008)<sup>27</sup>.

Indeed recent case studies concerning the implementation of the Musical Futures programme in which such pedagogies prevailed, revealed that students generally placed a high value on school music (89% of those participating in the first phase indicating enjoyment and 90% saying that they wanted to do well in lessons (Hallam et al., 2011: 21))<sup>28</sup>. However it should also be noted that changes over time were evident since fewer of the same interviewed students wished to do well at phase 2 (one year later) and less still at phase 3 (a further year on again). This potentially indicates that other factors contribute towards declining attitudes aside from pedagogical procedures. The study

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<sup>27</sup> To compare comments about enjoyment in music lessons made by pupils engaging in informal learning see Green, 2008, Chapter 5 (pp. 93-117).

<sup>28</sup> For a selection of students' comments about their likes and dislikes concerning the Musical Futures programme see Hallam et al. (2011, pp. 137-43).

also suggested that over time, boys' positivity towards musical engagement in school changed far more than girls', both for better and worse (although no comparative details were provided in terms of starting points or rates of change).

#### *5.41 Perceptions of Pupils' Enjoyment in this Study*

In this area, 128 comments came from boys, 120 from girls and 46 from teachers however gender distribution was not balanced since 169 were made about boys' enjoyment but only 111 about girls' (a ratio of 3: 2). Boys contributed 103 remarks concerning their own enjoyment but only 25 regarding girls' whereas relatively, girls commented less about their own enjoyment (77) but far more about boys' (43). These outcomes potentially suggest that boys' preferences and needs are not only likely to be more prominently voiced, but also heard and consequently addressed by their teachers.

Unlike the students, teachers were not asked about pupil enjoyment of curriculum music in either the survey or interviews but around half made reference to this. Of the resulting comments, 15 said that both sexes demonstrated equal levels, whilst a further 23 focused solely upon aspects of boys' enjoyment and just eight upon girls' (a ratio of 3: 1). Once again this suggests that teachers may be more aware of boys' preferences due to their greater likelihood of displaying disruptive behaviour if disinterested, unchallenged or bored (Ofsted, 1996, 2003, Allard, 2004, Younger & Warrington et al., 2005, Riddell & Tett, 2006, Keddie & Mills, 2007).

#### *5.42 Teachers on Pupils' Enjoyment*

Of the 23 remarks about boys' enjoyment of curriculum music, emerging themes centred upon their liking for performing or composing in popular musics (both as part of a band and using technology), world musics (where the instruments involved were percussion based) or when vocal techniques such as rapping and beat-boxing could be utilised. Boys were also identified as preferring to work in informal situations without teacher intervention (see Chapters 5-8 for in-depth exploration of these issues).

***School 15:*** ... they clearly enjoy music that involves a physical requirement plus high volume and which can involve an element of aggression...

**School 29:** Boys just love percussion!

**School 31:** Boys are keen on rapping and making beats using ICT.

**School 52:** They like practising by informally rehearsing and jamming.

Of the eight teachers remarking upon girls' musical enjoyment, all focused on their perceived preferences for singing, especially when performing in certain pop styles:

**School 51:** Girls generally like to sing along with backing tracks...

**School 30:** Girls prefer choir/singing lessons/pop ballads...

**School 31:** Girls seem happy when singing the latest pop/R&B/X factor songs.

Reasons for these perceptions will be investigated further throughout the thesis however the respondents' total failure to mention girls' enjoyment in relation to instrumental performing, composing, listening, improvising, or wishing to take part in any other musical genres other than chart pop/pop ballads was somewhat at odds with data supplied by the students themselves. In interviews, females revealed interests across all aspects of the music curriculum whilst there also existed a large group of musically 'switched-off' individuals too.

Although many teachers' restricted views about girls' interests, coupled with their greater concern for boys' musical enjoyment, seemed misguided and misinformed they could be forgiven in the light of observed behaviours within the classroom environment. Few, if any, girls in this study exhibited any verbal or physical expressions of dislike about music during lessons; instead they peacefully complied with instructions and mostly got on with tasks, or at least gave the appearance of doing so. Since none were loudly complaining or being disruptive, this tended to be seen as affirmation of the work by their teachers and peers alike. Consequently it appeared that little consideration was being given to the suitability of curriculum content or pedagogical strategies for girls in these classes.



### 5.43 Pupils on Boys' Enjoyment

Boys' comments both disclosed personal feelings and expressed more global viewpoints about generic preferences. Twelve from KS3 emphasised that their enjoyment primarily stemmed from the subject's practical nature:

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Yeah - it's like fun and most of its practical normally... so it's good.

**Josh (Rural Country/Yr9):** Lessons are good... it's not like sitting down and working from books like in other lessons...

Sixteen other KS3 boys' statements were ambivalent or contradictory, expressing a liking for some activities far more than others, but many were positive about working on their own interests or informally:

**Joe (Rural Country/Yr9):** Well... it depends on like what sort of music we're doing at the moment... and how much choice we have...

**Wayne (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I wanna be doing my own tunes on computer...

**Samuel (Seaside Town/Yr8):** ... or just playing around with the instruments... finding out what you're good at... forming a band...

**Bruce (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... boys wanna do music in a more experimental way... (*Chorus of background agreement.*)

**Morris: (Suburban Street/Yr9)** We like doing things that are loud with drums and guitars and stuff...

Only 13 KS3 boys expressed complete dislike for all aspects of the subject and 10 of these were from Year 7 and across all schools, supporting the notion that boys' disengagement with school music starts at a fairly young age (Colley et al., 1994, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Colley & Comber, 2003b, Lamont et al., 2003). Boredom and

the work being too difficult, or conversely not challenging enough, were the prime reasons for their disaffection as the following sample indicates:

**Reece (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Well I really hate music... I can't do it... it's hard... I don't like any of it really as I find it difficult...

**Jack (Rural Country/Yr7)** I don't like doing any of the work... it's boring...

**Jordan (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I don't like anything much... I don't really like the lessons... we do rubbish music when really we wanna play up to date music from now... or do more music on computers.

Other boys were very clear about their particular dislikes in certain disciplines:

**Bradley (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... I don't like playing other people's songs... I like making up my own stuff...

**Matt (Rural Country/Yr9):** I like the lesson itself but I don't like the fact that we don't have much choice over what we play... or the instruments we use (*chorus of agreement from others*)... we're always doing the same sort of things on the keyboard which is a bit boring...

**Jake (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... and when we've got to write things like say what the pitch and rhythm is... well it gets so boring...

**Justin (Seaside Town/Yr7):** To be honest I think that music here isn't really enjoyable... we just do singing, we listen and that's about it... we don't do much playing... probably because people mess about... but this means that I'm not very keen on it.

**Kieron (Seaside Town/Yr7):** Music in school is not great... the only thing we've done is play xylophones and glockenspiels... and write... which is just boring... I'd like to be allowed to make our own bands, play drums and stuff...

Only one suggested that some boys' negativity towards the subject may be a sham and stemmed from peer pressure to play out societal expectations about masculinity:

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I think that some boys might be hiding that they like music... it's not cool 'cos in this school to be cool is to be sporty and stuff like that... and to do what everyone else does<sup>29</sup>.

To summarise, the majority of KS3 boys identified their preferred activities as; computer-aided music-making, instrumental improvisation, informal exploration (free from teacher or topic constraints) and group performance activities, especially if these involved electronic instruments and working in popular genres. Their main dislikes included singing activities, listening and writing tasks, using formal notation, and following a prescribed curriculum. The degree of affinity between these outcomes and those pertaining to Green's research is noteworthy here (1993, 1996/2010, 1997)<sup>30</sup>.

All KS4 boys, except one individual, were affirmative about their chosen music courses with instrumental performing and composing being the most favoured pursuits by far. Listening activities (only mentioned by GCSE pupils) were not well received however, with total negativity emanating from those boys who commented (see Chapter 7 for details). Two boys summed up their generally positive feelings as follows:

**Jacob (Seaside Town/BTEC):** When you do music you feel... well your body just goes with an adrenalin rush... you're really glad that you're doing it.

**Marcus (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I like it, especially when we're rehearsing and doing lots of practical stuff – 'cos it's a well chilled out lesson... it's not all the same sort of work all the time ... 'cos a lot of school can be really boring...

Most KS3 girls' statements agreed with the boys' self-perceptions. Although the girls were divided as to how much boys liked music lessons, many agreed that they appeared happiest when engaging in practical work:

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<sup>29</sup> These sentiments were also commonly expressed by interviewees in the study by Frosh et al., 2003.

<sup>30</sup> For a direct comparison of similar comments collected from teachers and pupils in Green's study see Chapters 7 and 8 of *Music, Gender, Education* (1997).

***Suburban Street Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Megan:** I think they like practical... and picking out pieces on the keyboard...

**Chloe :** ... they don't wanna listen... they wanna get into the practical stuff more than some girls...

**Ella:** I think that the boys do like things that girls do... but they *really* like playing the electric guitar and drums...

**Rachael (Rural Country/Yr7):** They don't mind playing on the keyboard but I don't think that they like music in general really.

**Daisy (Rural Country/Yr7):** ... they really don't like doing things on paper...

**Stella (Seaside Town/Yr8):** They are quite loud... they like to play different things like banging stuff... drums, guitars or smashing the xylophones... they hate playing the keyboard normally... they've always got to whack the volume up... and they don't like listening... they're always banging on something...

Several girls also mentioned that boys' enjoyment depended upon being allowed to experiment and explore, free from the confines of structured and sequential tasks:

**Gemma (Suburban Street/Yr7):** In music they think that they can just do their own thing... they don't do what the teacher says and they don't know the chords or anything... they like doing it but... they just sort of put aside what they're supposed to do, and do what they really wanna do.

**Zoe (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I think they like different things... 'cos boys like adding new things into the songs we're doing and the girls are like 'Oh no!'

**Martha (Suburban Street/Yr9) :** ... and boys sometimes they do stuff that they're not asked for... inadequate stuff, and not what they're supposed to do...

Only one girl said that there were few gender difference in enjoyment levels since girls were equally disinterested:

**Bethany (Seaside Town/Yr7):** ... they probably do get a bit bored of playing the same things on the same instrument, just like we do...

#### *5.44 Pupils on Girls' Enjoyment*

Of the 77 comments from girls, around two-thirds (52) expressed personal feelings whilst just 25 gave more global viewpoints; potentially indicating that they tend to generalise less about themselves. Slightly more KS3 girls than boys confirmed an overall liking for music lessons (19) but most notably 11 of these were from Suburban Street, six from Seaside Town and just two from Rural Country. In addition, of the nine girls who expressed total dislike of music lessons, five came from Rural Country and three from Seaside Town. This suggests that levels of enjoyment for girls in the schools that offered conventional, feminine-gendered music curricula and pedagogies (according to the gendered framework (Table 4)) were lower than in Suburban Street which did not (and whose curriculum and pedagogies were deemed more masculine-gendered).

However, although these girls did not appear to like the curriculum and pedagogy on offer any more than the boys, it is crucial to acknowledge that many may have achieved far better performance outcomes due to their willingness to tolerate it and participate accordingly. Meanwhile although many girls at Suburban Street said that they were enjoying the pop and technology orientated curriculum and related pedagogies on offer (thus indicating that this sort of programme is not exclusively favoured by boys) it remains unknown as to whether their performance outcomes were deemed equally as successful<sup>31</sup>. Girls' reasons for enjoyment in music were similar to those of the boys':

**Sarah (Rural Country/Yr7):** I like it because you get to learn about stuff that you didn't exactly know at primary school.

**Anna (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I like music because... I get to learn about it... I'm learning how to play the keyboard now...

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<sup>31</sup> I did not ask departments to provide KS3 National Curriculum teacher-assessment data since these are not nationally moderated (like KS4 examinations) and thus I deemed them to be unreliable tools by which to make cross-comparisons.

**Megan (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... you don't have to write stuff down... it's more of a creative lesson...

**Chloe (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I think that it's more sociable... which is nice...

**Stella (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I do like music because you can express your feelings...

In terms of popular activities many girls identified both composing and performing on keyboards as being their favourites as revealed by the following sample:

**Martha (Suburban Street/Yr9)** We prefer practical things... playing and composing.

**Alex (Rural Country/Yr7):** I like playing on keyboards and when we get to make up our own music...

**Natasha Seaside Town/Yr8):** I like when we go on the keyboard and pick songs that we wanna try and learn...

**Diana (Seaside Town/Yr7):** ... I just like playing my own tunes and everything.

Around the same number of girls' as boys (11 as opposed to 12) held ambivalent feelings about school music. Reasons for this were mostly about the tedium of lessons rather than difficulty with the subject.

**Zoe (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Yeah... music's all right... but I think it's a bit boring sometimes...

**Olivia (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I don't like music... I don't really think that we learn much... I would like to learn how to play a musical instrument properly...

Like boys, many girls also detested having to do any written work:

**Holly (Rural Country/Yr9):** I hate it as well when you finish a topic and then you have to write about it... (*chorus of agreement from others*) and sometimes it takes a whole lesson to do that and it gets really boring.

**Diana (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I don't like it when we have to write down stuff because that means we're not really doing proper music...

Indeed the same number of girls as boys (13) indicated that they personally disliked all aspects of music lessons. The following interchange is interesting in that the girls expressed their views as vehemently as many boys:

***Rural Country Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Daisy:** I don't like music... I just find it quite boring...

**Cassie:** I *hate* music! I don't like anything in it at all ... and I hate how the teacher goes on and on and on... and then... I just *hate* everything... it's not so much I find it hard but I'm just not interested. You know when we're standing outside in the queue? Everyone says 'Oh no we've got music next'...

**Susannah:** Nobody actually likes music in this class...

**Cassie:** Everyone can't wait for break... it's like... good, only 20 minutes left...

**Susannah:** ...well they like music, just not the way they teach it.

**Cassie:** Yeah, they like music... listening to it... but they hate the lessons. (*Chorus of agreement from others.*)

Meanwhile only girls criticised their teachers' pedagogical approaches:

***Suburban Street Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Zoe:** The only thing that's boring is when teachers talk for too long...

**Amy:** It's all right but sometimes... if you don't understand things... they'll say what to do and then when you go and do it, and you put your hand up, they just ignore you and won't help... or they don't help you as much, if you get me? We should do more stuff than just computers, keyboards and the teachers talking...

**Rhianna (Suburban Street/Yr9):** What I can't stand is when one of the teachers treats us and talks to us like we're in primary school... when we want

to focus more upon the music rather than just play musical games... that's all right for Year 7 but *not* 9. (*Others chorus in agreement.*)

**Olivia (Seaside Town/Yr7):** Our teacher... talks about like brass and woodwind and stuff like that... and there's just too much talking rather than doing.

In summary, the majority of KS3 girls who expressed enjoyment in music identified instrumental performance and composition, especially when using keyboards, alongside singing, as preferred activities. Their main dislikes included written tasks and boredom with the content or teaching methods that were being utilised (and further explored across Chapters 6-9.) Although their preferences were slightly different to boys' there were still many elements in common, particularly in that they preferred practical activities (including composing) and disliked non-practical tasks such as writing.

As expected, almost every KS4 girl was affirmative about her chosen music course. Performing, instrumentally and vocally (not mentioned by any KS4 boys), were by far the most favoured activities however very few spoke of composing favourably (unlike their male counterparts). Listening activities (only mentioned by GCSE pupils) were considered in both positive and negative lights with a range of views expressed (unlike for boys).

Although it was presumed that KS4 pupils, having opted for a subject that they enjoyed, would not have declared an outright dislike for the subject, three girls (all from Rural County) indicated that they did not like any aspect of GCSE music. Most strikingly, they stressed that the work was very different to their expectations, especially when compared to KS3 experiences. Since the KS3 curriculum in this department was very feminine-gendered according to the framework (Table 4) I hypothesise that the more masculine-gendered nature of the KS4 course (see section 11.223) had alienated them to various degrees:

**Annabel (Rural Country/GCSE):** I just don't like music now... I've changed personality-wise and gone off it. It's a combination of stuff... I thought that it would be different and also the things that I like in music have changed...

**Katherine (Rural Country/GCSE):** Well, I was quite good at it in Year 9 and



then in Year 10 it just got so much harder... and the teachers are pushing you constantly... and I just don't like it... so I'm just not trying at the moment. Most of it is different to what I thought it would be... it's basically all around composing and coursework and not what I expected.

**Vanessa (Rural Country/GCSE):** I liked the lessons in the lower school and I thought that it would be similar to that... but it's not. It's different because it's much harder. In the lower school it wasn't so serious and you didn't have to do stuff if you didn't want to... and now you really have to think for yourself.

In terms of boys' comments about girls' enjoyment, they were not only fewer in number (just 25) but frequently inaccurate when compared to girls' assessments of their male peers. The boys were often misguided in terms of their beliefs concerning how much girls enjoyed music (especially those from Year 7) although some correctly identified that they enjoyed singing and using keyboards. Most pertinently boys from all three schools were unanimous that *all* girls liked *all* aspects of music lessons:

#### ***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Gary:** When we come into music lessons it's like... 'Oh, it's only music now'... but for them it's the big thing of the day...

**Lewis:** In every lesson we say, 'Oh no we've got music'... but some of the girls are shouting, 'Oh yeah, we've got music!'... We don't really wanna do music...

**Ben:** Whenever we have music all the boys feel, 'Oh no, let's get this over and done with' but the girls are like, 'Oh yes, let's enjoy every minute of this'...

**Lewis:** Sometimes when we've got to do writing, about pitch and rhythm... the girls don't mind that but the boys... we get bored 'cos we wanna *do* something...

#### ***Seaside Town Year 8 boys' discussion***

**Kemal:** I think that they like it more... when you say to a boy 'We've got music next' they're like, 'Oh no' but girls are all right about it.

**Tony:** They're all excited about it...

**Samuel:** All that we've done in Year 8... I reckon that girls like it much more...

**Kemal:** Yep, especially keyboards...

**Wayne:** ... and singing.

**David (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I reckon that girls are well different in lessons because they're really up for it and they wanna do it and boys... they don't.

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Probably they like different things... I think that this sort of subject suits girls more...

**Callum (Rural Country/Yr7):** I think that it's 'cos they're feminine... and they like girly stuff... so they like music...

Several of these comments subtly suggest that music is more suited to girls whilst the last openly defines the subject as feminine-gendered (notably he comes from Rural Country where the KS3 curriculum strongly conformed to this perception). One other individual also indicated that boys were more adventurous in their approach to musical activities than girls whom he viewed as conformist and safe (and in agreement with many teachers in both studies and across the wider educational realms (see section 2.3)):

**Regan (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I don't reckon that they like the same as us... boys like to try things out more and explore the instruments... and girls like to do everything from the same book week after week...

## 5.5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has provided a detailed exploration of teachers' and pupils' beliefs about girls' and boys' musical attributes and levels of enjoyment when engaging in the subject. Key issues concerning musical attributes include that:

- The majority of statements strongly resonated with Green's earlier findings (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), confirming that beliefs about boys, girls and musical engagement function as indisputable and universal truths. Girls continue to be viewed as dependable, co-operative and industrious but lacking talent, creativity and confidence (Warrington et al., 2000, Francis & Skelton, 2001, Jones & Myhill, 2004, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007, Skelton & Francis, 2009), especially when it comes to highly esteemed areas of the curriculum such as composition (Green 1997, Armstrong 2008, 2011). Meanwhile boys are characterised as

disruptive, disobedient and lazy except in the aforementioned highly-prized areas such as technology and composition in which they are viewed as innovative, individualistic and experimental. These socially-constructed norms appear to have remained constant despite being set against a background of enormous change in music education over the past 20 years.

- Pupils mostly upheld these stereo-typical views but also described KS3 boys as predominantly poorly behaved in lessons (including those deemed musically talented) and girls as mostly compliant and non-disruptive, regardless of their perceived abilities.
- Although many teachers concluded that girls were more likely to possess the necessary positive qualities that might result in the production of good work, the majority did not indicate that this was a likely outcome of these attributes; indeed only a handful referred to their work as being of a higher standard. It appeared that respondents' perceptions were clouded by the dominance of the over-arching masculine delineation of music (Green, 1997) which created a mismatch between their thinking about girls and contradictory current data revealing girls' examination supremacy (DfE 2013, Edexcel 2013).
- One exception to this concerned listening and appraising where girls' superior literacy standards were more commonly understood to allow them to excel.
- An illusion also prevailed (upheld by pupils and teachers alike) that males gradually blossomed in terms of their creativity and innovation, as they progress through the secondary years, displaying vastly superior musical outcomes by KS4 (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). This image was so powerful that once again it overshadowed any measurable evidence to the contrary.

Key issues concerning musical enjoyment include that:

- Both teachers and pupils in this study were more concerned with boys' contentment. Potential reasons for this may revolve around teachers' greater awareness of, and increased anxiety about, boys' requirements through their greater likelihood of openly expressing dissatisfaction via poor behaviour.
- Although it is unlikely that any teachers consciously responded more to boys' needs it is suggested that girls' overall greater passivity and acquiescence are mistakenly construed as affirmation of *all* subject content and methods. Consequently teachers focus upon meeting the requirements of boys, whose

more vociferous behaviours ensure a greater likelihood of them being addressed.

- Poor behaviour from boys was frequently observed at KS3. Reasons for this may be diverse but it is hypothesised that a primary problem concerned the pedagogies in action which were often not as masculine-gendered as the curriculum content. Consequently a mismatch occurred whereby feminine-gendered approaches (such as using formal notation and structured learning) were applied to masculine-gendered content (such as using pop or technology).
- A further anomaly concerned levels of enjoyment in that both boys and teachers assumed that girls unanimously liked classroom music. However no evidence for this emerged from the data since plenty of female interviewees were as critical of the curricula and pedagogies that they experienced as boys. Once again this misunderstanding primarily occurred because most girls were covert about their musical preferences, whilst also rarely appearing disruptive, even when engaging in unpopular activities. The history of women's greater involvement in the educational sphere of music may also dominate here (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Green, 1993, 1996/2010 1997), denying current trends regarding girls' beliefs and behaviours whilst interrupting any evidence emerging to the contrary.

## **Chapter 6: Performing and Gender**

This chapter examines issues surrounding performing as part of the school curriculum (extra-curricular concerns are dealt with in Chapter 10). It was by far the most commented upon discipline by adults and students alike, despite an equal emphasis upon other musical accomplishments within the National Curriculum. The notion that outstanding performance skills define the peak of musicianship thus prevails, no doubt reflecting the greater value that society continues to place upon their acquisition. The chapter divides into three distinct sections examining instrumental playing, singing and commonly utilised performance pedagogies. all within the classroom arena.

### **6.1 Gendered Traditions in Instrumental Performing**

In order to understand differences between boys' and girls' preferences it is important to explore historical traditions in performing. As previously stated (section 1.34), Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) suggests that those women who have participated in the public sphere of musical performance have usually done so through the affirmation of patriarchal notions of femininity via certain instrumental displays. For example a keyboard instrument (although a technological invention with some masculine overtones) at which a woman can be modestly seated, has conventionally been considered acceptable, especially if used to either accompany the voice or in a domestic environment. Similarly plucked stringed instruments (especially those of smaller size) have a significant place in women's musical history, as evidenced in much of the art work of the Western world, since they do not change facial expressions or stance (Post, 1994: 40). However images involving 'unladylike' modes of performance (such as blowing hard or making prominent movements) on large, loud instruments remain a rarity, since they challenge traditional concepts of femininity and consequently tend to be discouraged.

Green further argues that these established practices help to explain why girls have customarily found themselves to be positively reflected in school music: firstly because women have dominated the private domain of music-making for many centuries; and secondly because it has conventionally focused upon the study of the classical canon, a mostly demure and discreet genre, through which girls have received approval for their involvement, at teacher, school and even societal levels. Indeed Green

suggests that participation in it is so symbolically affirmative for females that the delineations of the music itself, and not only the practices surrounding it, come to represent femininity and perhaps more radically when considering boys' engagement, effeminacy, within the institution of the school (1999b: 168).

Conversely, the ability of female instrumentalists to be unconditionally accepted in the performance of popular musics (which do not affirm but interrupt the traditional notion of feminine display) remains an issue since many styles, especially those considered less mainstream, are deemed to employ masculine methods of discourse<sup>32</sup>. This is both evident in the sorts of instruments and technologies employed in the making of such musics, especially in that their undertaking frequently requires aggression, power and physical strength, notions which, 'have been traditionally associated with hegemonic, mainstream masculinity' (Bayton, 1998: 40).

Green (1997) suggests that many girls abstain from becoming actively involved in performing pop music in order to avoid the inevitable clash between their femininity and the genre's masculine delineations, which can easily stir up feelings of negativity within performer and audience alike. Therefore a girl's ambiguity, or even total alienation, towards playing bass guitar or drums relates to the interrupting effect of the activity's masculine delineations upon her own ability to perform. By crossing the gender divide and playing an instrument that has macho connotations she is 'taking a risk with the delineations of her reputations, or invoking an interrupted display of her femininity' (Green 1997: 185), whilst her attempts will struggle to pass as authentic since they will always be, 'read through the grid of normative femininity' (Bjork, 2011: 61). Only those girls who have been encouraged to break gender codes from an early age are likely to possess the confidence to withstand these criticisms alongside other external pressures to conform to stereotypical female behaviour (Bayton, 1998).

Boys have different issues to overcome when partaking in performance displays but particularly when these evoke aspects of its feminine delineations. This situation occurs most conspicuously when males are involved in the realisation of classical music, especially if it is played on a feminine-gendered instrument such as a flute or violin. Indeed it appears that a boy will put his symbolic masculinity at risk by doing so, thus laying himself open to peer-group allegations of effeminacy or even homosexuality, and the bullying that frequently accompanies this (Koza, 1994, Green, 1997, Harrison, 2009). However his participation in popular styles, especially those

<sup>32</sup> See, amongst others: Frith & McRobbie (1978), Bayton (1988, 1998), Walser (1993), Bennett (2000), Bannister (2006), Leonard (2007) and Bjork (2011).

with macho connotations (such as rap, hip-hop, thrash or metal) can be acceptable to peers since they affirm aspects of aggressive sexuality, and even misogyny, whilst furthering the symbolic representation of heterosexual masculinity (Walser, 1993, Bennett, 2000, Bannister, 2006, Bjork, 2011).

Green further suggests that it is only those students who possess outstanding musical ability that can transgress this situation and cross the gender-divided. They do this by focusing the listener-observer upon the ‘inherent’ meaning of the music whilst deflecting attention away from its more problematic delineations.

### *6.11 Theories of Musical Meaning*

At this juncture it is relevant to consider the complex issue of musical meaning in music. Although various binary explanations exist (including amongst others, Meyer’s embodied versus designative (1956), Coker’s congeneric versus extrageneric (1972), and Middleton’s primary versus secondary signification (1990)) I believe that it is worthwhile retaining Green’s concepts of ‘inherent’ or ‘inter-sonic’ and ‘delineated’ for the purposes of this study since they have been consistently applied in educational contexts and are easily transferred to the likes of this study.

Green originally used the term ‘inherent’ to signify meaning that is embodied, and thus an inseparable part of the music itself, and ‘delineated’ to signify meaning that is conferred through extra-musical associations, aside from the notes themselves. One problem lying at the heart of this theory concerns Green’s use of the word inherent, since its properties (identified as the musical patterns and configurations that function in the context of recognised stylistic norms) have the potential to be as culturally-mediated as those possessing delineated meaning. In other words they are ‘learnt phenomena’ and the products of the lived human experience. Indeed because of confusion regarding her terminology, Green now refrains from using the word inherent and has substituted it with ‘inter-sonic’ to suggest meaning that is entirely embodied in the sounds themselves (2008: 87).

## **6.2 Pupil Identity and Classroom Performing**

In terms of classroom music-making, primary pupils appear more likely to maintain a positive self-identity because fewer extra-curricular opportunities exist to create

hierarchical divisions (Lamont, 2002). However, once at secondary school, where the worlds of curricular and extra-curricular music diverge more radically, pupils' views concerning that which constitutes musicianship become narrower, focusing upon excellence in instrumental performance to the detriment of other skills. This results in more girls than boys describing themselves as 'playing musicians', especially as they tend to partake in instrumental lessons in greater numbers (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001). Students' musical identities are thus inordinately shaped by the activities of professional musicians with whom they will learn to censoriously compare themselves and many will constrain their musical engagement accordingly (Lamont, 2002, O' Neill, 2002).

Lamont & Tarrant's study (2001) of KS3 pupils' identification with school music clearly demonstrates this process in action. Although more students described themselves as 'trained' musicians in a school with high standards of instrumental provision, large number also labelled themselves as 'non-musicians'. However substantially more categorised themselves as 'playing musicians' in another school in which there was little extra-curricular provision. Similarly, more girls said that they identified with music lessons and described themselves as 'playing musicians', especially in the first school, in which a comprehensive extra-curricular programme took place. This begs the question as to whether those departments that produce high calibre musicians also unintentionally alienate many pupils, but particularly boys, who are less likely to have formal instrumental experiences or identify with highbrow musical genres (see section 5.1).

### **6.3 Classroom Instrumental Performing in this Study**

Instrumental performing (along with singing) was one of the most commented upon areas by teachers. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that the majority have been formally trained at some point in their musical development (Hargreaves et al., 2003). However the 78 teachers in the current survey tended to refer to performing in the light of extra-curricular participation rather than the everyday classroom (consequently their statements appear in Chapter 10 on extra-curricular music). The paltry amount of responses concerning curricular performing (seven) was somewhat ironic in light of the large number of such activities observed in the field.

This outcome is significant in that it confirms the importance that society continues to place upon public performing; indeed music departments, both historically



and currently, appear disproportionately judged by the standards that their pupils can exhibit in terms of concerts, shows and recitals with these considerations often surpassing, the importance of examination results. As a consequence many concentrate upon maintaining highly public departmental profiles, potentially to the detriment of exploring the multifarious private practices that occur within them. It should also be noted that teachers' comments about other musical activities were not skewed in this way, being more focused upon pupils' interactions in the classroom rather than out of it.

Although some of the 73 students' remarks (44 from KS3 and 29 from KS4) referred to extra-curricular practices, most, in stark contrast to their teachers, spoke of the classroom as an important arena. Notably almost two-thirds of the girls (48) contributed, potentially revealing their greater interest in this area. Meanwhile at KS4, two-thirds of statements came from GCSE students suggesting that they perceived excellence in this discipline as a prerequisite for taking the course.

### 6.31 Teachers on Classroom Instrumental Performing

It should be recalled (see section 4.2) that current teachers' beliefs in this area were markedly different from those in 1993, suggesting that although instrumental performing remained predominantly popular with all students across KS3, boys' preferences for it, unlike those of girls', increased as the years progressed.

<b>Instrumental Performing</b>	Yr 7	Boys Prefer=5	Equal Preference=62	Girls Prefer=4
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<b>Instrumental Performing</b>	Yr 9	Boys Prefer=11	Equal Preference=55	Girls Prefer=6
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Of the seven classroom-orientated respondents, five agreed that boys and girls were 'equal but different' when engaging whilst two stated that they could see no diversity regarding gendered behaviours. Some noted contrasts in terms of the instruments that were utilised:

**School 2:** Girls tend to do better at keyboards/traditional class instruments and vocal stuff. Boys prefer using drum-kit, dhol, samba percussion and guitar.

**School 68:** Success tends to vary according to the instrumental area we are studying since boys and girls like different things.

Four replies also indicated a change occurring across KS3 with boys suddenly making notable improvements as the years progressed:

**School 6:** End of KS3 results show boys closing the gap on girls in this area.

**School 36:** In normal class lessons boys slightly outperform as the key stage progresses and many become more confident.

**School 39:** It often depends on age. Girls tend to be better at keyboard skills at the lower secondary level but as they get older boys become more engaged, curious about playing other instruments and begin to surpass the girls.

Changes in perceptions concerning the rise in boys' musical ability in relation to increasing age may have multiple causes; from the greater diversification of KS3 curriculum and pedagogy that occurs in many departments by Year 9 (see section 4.412) to the increasing influence of the overall masculine delineation of music that exists in broader society (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). However it should be reiterated that no concrete evidence exists to support this notion whilst examination outcomes refute the likelihood of its veracity (see section 1.11).

### *6.32 Classroom Instrumental Performing in the Focus Schools*

As previously mentioned, instrumental performing was the most prominent activity in classroom observations however standards varied enormously. Most relevant to this study was the wide ability gap (in favour of girls) that seemed to exist in Rural Country:

#### ***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

**9.18:** Pupils get on with their individual learning using the project booklet. I talk to two girls who explain how they work through it and are assessed on certain tasks by the teacher. I notice that the girls appear well organised and are well ahead in the booklet; they clearly understand the tasks and are progressing well.

**9.22:** I watch two boys on xylophones who have been struggling to perform three pitch phrases based on crotchets and quavers and are now being helped by the teacher. Although one boy plays a phrase almost correctly, he slightly mis-

times two quavers and therefore does not pass the task; he must now continue practising until perfect. I sense a level of frustration in this pupil whose performance is so near and yet so far.

**9.27:** I talk to a group of boys at the back of the class, two on keyboards and two on xylophones. One has his xylophone back to front and is moving in the opposite direction to the notation as he plays; he doesn't appear to have noticed the problem but is clearly confused, so I turn it round to help. Another says that he used to play tenor horn at primary school but has given up. I note that despite this, he is not very far into the booklet; in fact all four boys are way behind the girls I have visited.

At the root of this gender disparity appeared to be the notation-based, formally-constructed curriculum implemented in Rural Country; it was clearly better tolerated (if not liked) by girls who superficially seemed to possess the required level of notational skills, either through prior instrumental learning or greater willingness to engage.

### *6.33 Pupils on Classroom Instrumental Performing*

The majority of statements across both Key Stages (around three-quarters) were positive with many pupils indicating that this was by far their favourite classroom activity. Girls were particularly enthusiastic at KS3, slightly more so than boys, as revealed by the following sample:

**Bethany (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I like performing... I like playing on the different instruments that I haven't really played on before.

**Florence (Rural Country/GCSE):** I love it when we get to actually play...

**Chantelle (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I like performing... solo or ensemble...I really enjoy it ... just performing in front of people...

Learning to play keyboards was extremely popular with Yr 7 pupils, especially girls (14 responded positively as opposed to five boys):

**Georgina (Rural Country/Yr7):** I like sight-reading too and generally playing on the keyboards as well...

**David (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I just like playing around on the keyboard... if we're not doing that then it's boring...

Only 10 girls' comments were negative (three from KS3 and seven from KS4) and all involved feelings of inferiority and self-consciousness when playing in front of others rather than a total dislike of the activity itself. Notably, the KS4 girls were either taking GCSE or the more performance based BTEC at Seaside Town:

**Lydia (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... I don't like people staring at me... it's embarrassing...

**Marie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I don't like performing... I get real stage fright when playing... really nervous.

**Courtney (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I don't like performing... well it's all right in front of these guys but I don't like doing it in front of loads of people... I lose my confidence in front of an audience.

In contrast only one male from KS4 expressed similar discomfort:

**Elliot (Seaside Town/BTEC):** ... and the only thing that I don't like is when I need to perform... in front of other people... it makes me scared.

It is possible that many boys secretly felt the same but it appears that they are less likely to confess openly to insecurities or feelings of inadequacy, and instead tend to over-compensate by showing-off or demonstrating extreme bravado in performance circumstances (Green, 1997: 174). Indeed several older boys expressed enormous confidence about all performance situations, unlike any girls in their peer group:

**Toby (Rural Country/GCSE):** I love performing... it's easy...

**Anthony (Rural Country/GCSE):** I never have any problems with it...

The roots of boys' negativity about performance were superficially very different from those of the girls' being mostly about a dislike of the sorts of instruments that they were expected to play. Six KS3 comments were from less well-resourced Rural Country (where boys wished to use those associated with rock music) and Seaside Town (where many of the excellent departmental resources were not made available to them). Research indicates that all pupils say that is important to play on new and authentic instruments that have credibility in the outside world (Burton, 2010, Shervington, 2010) however in this study it appeared more crucial to boys since only one girl commented likewise:

**William (Rural Country/Yr9):** I find the instruments a bit crappy... I don't think that they're very good... like the xylophones (*others murmur agreement*) ... or keyboards are sometimes... well not very good... one didn't even have a key on it for the whole of last year...

**Matt (Rural Country/Yr9):** It's all right but they really need to get new stuff in like guitars...

**Shane (Seaside Town/Yr7):** You learn to play on some of the little percussion instruments but we never get to play proper instruments... guitar and drums... because we've got a band room and I really want to play the guitar and the drums and the keyboards... it would be better if we did that.

**Colin (Seaside Town/Yr7):** ... you get to play small not very effective instruments but it's not very interesting...

**Chanel (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I do like playing the instruments but all we do is play them little things (*she means glockenspiels*)... doing the same notes over and over... we're not doing much... I'd prefer to be doing piano or keyboard...

## 6.4 Gendered Traditions in Singing

Since singing affirms patriarchal notions of femininity through the act of bodily display, children cannot help but perceive its feminine delineation from a young age and consequently construct clearly defined gender boundaries around it (Green, 1997). Hall's study of five year-old boys' views about singing and playing demonstrates that wide-spread stereo-typing, concerning its feminisation, operates from an early age (2005). Despite their attendance at a single-sexed school in which many vocal activities were prevalent, the pupils generally held hegemonic views; singing was for girls, boys should play loud or low instruments, and males should never sing in the high part of their range (the sub-text of this indicating that it is perceived as feminised or even homosexual behaviour). Indeed it appears that boys' fear of having to perform this act of 'musical transvestism' (Green, 1993: 248) results in many deciding not to sing at all by the time the transition from primary to secondary school takes place and when the onset of adolescence concerns about masculinity and peer relationships are thought to become more pressing (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Ashley, 2009, Hall, 2009).

Welsh et al., (2009) noted that boys across all age groups in primary school were less positive than girls about singing, demonstrating lower confidence levels and poorer self-singing efficacy. Although *all* older pupils in the study were less engaged with school singing, this applied far more to boys who nevertheless indicated that they enjoyed it at a personal (private) level but disliked participating in mass social situations (and thus supporting the notion that individual musical identity becomes increasingly salient by the end of primary years (Dibben, 2002)).

By the onset of adolescence a boy thus risks his symbolic masculinity when engaging in the act of singing, laying himself open to peer-group allegations of effeminacy and even homosexuality and the bullying that frequently accompanies such accusations (Koza, 1994, Harrison, 2009). Despite this, some research suggests that it is the pedagogies promoted by individual teachers who are passionate about boys singing, alongside a deeper understanding of the processes involved in the vocal changes taking place at adolescence, that have the power to transform boys' willingness to participate (Ashley, 2013). Meanwhile, although singing fails to construct masculinity in most of its conventional forms it is perceived as macho when employed in such aggressive styles as rap, hip-hop, thrash or metal (Frith & McRobbie, 1978, Walser, 1993, Bennett,

2000, Bjork, 2011). These affirm the symbolic representation of heterosexual masculinity so completely that even the use of extreme falsetto can be deemed acceptable (Nehring, 1997).

In contrast girls, who find themselves positively reflected in most song traditions, may invite problems when singing in popular styles, since physicality plays an even great part in the performance of pop music, causing the body to become a major part of the music's associations. Green suggests that such performances frequently invoke 'relatively risqué, dangerous or sexually suggestive display-delineations' (1997:164) and automatically focus attention on the performer's attractiveness, causing the audience to regard aspects of their actual or potential sexuality to become part of the music itself. If schools are expected to promote appropriate sexual conduct in accordance with the values of the wider society, then a risqué performance could be seen as controversial within that setting. However Green also reminds us, that when a girl acts in this manner she also arouses a familiar and acceptable social construction of femininity; that of the, 'madonna-whore dichotomy' (1997: 165) in which a 'good' girl flips to her 'naughty' alter-ego within the confines of a performance situation.

### **6.5 Singing in this Study**

The notion that singing continues to be perceived as strongly feminine-gendered was confirmed by 112 teachers' statements. Unlike instrumental performance, it was predominantly spoken of with regards to the everyday curriculum since just 28 respondents referred to extra-curricular aspects. Meanwhile 52 remarks were made by students, the majority from KS3 (36) and suggesting that this activity was of greater concern to them than their older counterparts. Two-thirds were also from Year 7 students, implying that singing featured more prominently at the start of KS3 but declined across the years. In terms of gender, 27 comments were made by boys (22 of these arising from KS3) whereas the 25 girls' statements emanated from all year groups. There was also a notable contrast in the nature of the remarks; boys were mostly very negative towards singing but girls more varied.

At KS4 specific comments were only made by students from Seaside Town, many of whom used their voices to perform, especially girls. In contrast, students taking GCSE, and likewise those studying BTEC in Suburban Street, described themselves as either computer-based musicians, instrumentalists or ex-instrumentalists and

consequently they failed to comment upon singing. It also appeared that very few KS4 boys were now participating in any vocal activities in these departments.

### 6.51 Teachers on Singing

As previously stated (see section 4.2) respondents' views were almost identical to those in the 1993 survey with singing continuing to be considered strongly feminine-gendered. Current participants even suggested that it became even more so as KS3 progressed.

<b>Singing</b>	Yr 7	Boys Prefer=0	Equal Preference=45	Girls Prefer=33
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<b>Singing</b>	Yr 9	Boys Prefer=2	Equal Preference=21	Girls Prefer=47
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Apart from the one respondent who believed that boys were more successful (boys comprised 70% of the school's population so this was hardly surprising), 12 discerned no gender differences arguing that boys were as happy as girls to participate:

*School 8:* ... boys are as willing as girls to sing in groups.

*School 25:* In class participation is equal...

*School 53:* Some boys are really keen on singing and in normal curriculum lessons they often show equal enthusiasm to the girls, if not attainment.

*School 73 (Seaside Town):* In class singing boys are quite up for it - there is an air of competitiveness with boys...

Another said that the current media environment helped the situation:

*School 28:* ... in the last few years TV programmes like 'The X Factor' have made it more acceptable for everyone to sing.

However these views were far outweighed by the majority:



**School 7:** In class singing girls participate much better; boys are reluctant even if the song is more male orientated.

**School 32:** As far as classroom or choir activities are concerned girls are freer about singing. Boys are more guarded...

**School 64:** Girls naturally seem to enjoy class singing much more:

Two respondents cited good practice in primary school as counter-acting this culture:

**School 31:** Boys in Year 7 will sing in groups or sometimes solo as a result of primary school teaching.

**School 36:** In lessons both are willing to join in during Years 7 and 8. This is because they have often come from singing environments at primary school.

Four others disputed this however, suggesting that the feminisation of singing was already strongly apparent at primary level:

**School 41:** ... boys say they are made to do too much at primary school. My six year old son has just completed Year 1 and already he has preconceptions that 'singing is for girls'.

**School 61:** Boys... arrive with the idea that singing is gay from primary school.

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** I saw one of our partner primary schools' performances of 'Joseph' ... Joseph was a girl... they were nearly all girls in it...

Of the 21 respondents who gave very specific reasons for boys' reticence to sing at secondary level they were unanimous that these emanated from negative peer pressure and personal image issues regarding homosexuality:

**School 9:** Very few boys take part in choir or sing in lessons; peer pressure is the main problem as many boys insist that it's gay.

**School 16:** Too many boys in Year 8 and above see it as a feminine activity.

**School 50:** Boys are too shy or think they're too cool...

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** It is seen in school as a feminine thing. This means that it is accepted as being an OK activity for girls and openly gay boys.

In contrast, seven respondents viewed girls as less shy and more secure:

**School 34:** Girls seem more confident.

**School 40:** Girls are not as self-conscious about their singing voices at this age.

**School 55:** Girls are less scared of what their friends might think.

**School 70:** Girls are less inhibited at performing in this way...

Girls' greater likelihood of taking singing lessons was cited by 28 teachers as an explanation for their superior vocal standards but this was a skewed perception since singing lessons were only taken by relatively small numbers and could not possibly explain their wider success. Meanwhile physical changes in boys' voices was cited by eight respondents as a reason for their poorer participation in school singing:

**School 50:** Boys are sometimes embarrassed about voice-breaking issues.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Inhibitions abound though when boys' voices break.

Changes across KS3 in respect of boys' declining involvement with singing were noted by 12 teachers, with some stating that they retreated to 'safer' areas of instrumental performance (that equally did not cast aspersions upon their sexuality):

**School 26:** Singing becomes predominantly female by Year 9 – most musical boys take up (rock) band instruments.

**School 30:** Girls are slightly keener on classroom singing at KS3 progresses.

**School 36:** In lessons both are willing to join in during years 7 and 8 but in Year 9 it is mainly girls that sing - however we are beginning to change that culture.

**Ms Flatley (Rural Country):** In Year 7 you can say 'Right, we're going to do some singing' and although you might get a few groans from some you know they feel like they ought to get up and do it or else they might get told off. By the time you get to Year 9 it's 'I'm not doing that, no way!', especially from boys. It's that age thing... adolescence really.

Improvements in this situation during KS4 were noted by six respondents however it is likely that their opinions were skewed in that they were only considering those who had opted for music rather than the wider school population:

**School 3:** ... by Year 10 the boys are as good as the girls at getting involved.

**School 77:** By the time male students reach Year 11 and have taken courses such as GCSE music and BTEC performing arts they are happier about performing vocally in front of people... but many still prefer to sing in bands than class.

In terms of content, 10 respondents noted the different sorts of songs that boys wanted to perform which were in keeping with aforementioned macho genres (see section 6.4):

**School 31:** Boys are shy and averse to singing although rapping is popular...

**School 32:** Boys feel more comfortable when it comes to rapping or beat-boxing.

**School 73:** ... you have to pick your material carefully – they can be put off if even if they think that a song's a bit 'girly'.

**School 74:** ... boys prefer not to sing in the latest pop styles.

Of the three respondents remarking upon the effect of teachers as role-models, two argued that male HoDs who were vocalists could make a difference to boys' level of participation (Ashley, 2013):

**School 14:** Mainly girls like to sing here, however this may well change in September when a male member of staff takes over.

**School 65:** I am a (male) voice coach of many years experience – 10% of school population sing in our various groups and the gender balance is equal; it's the HoD that makes or breaks singing.

Despite the concerns expressed, only one teacher said that singing should be an area for intervention in music education:

**School 6:** Despite a levelling out in most curriculum areas regarding gender, boys need focused assistance in overcoming their negative issues about singing.

It is certainly true that various government-initiated reports across the last decade (Jaffrey et al., 2006, Henley, 2011, Ofsted, 2012) have stressed that music educators should make singing a prime focus since it should be at the heart of universal music-making across *all* key stages. However the lack of singing at secondary level, as identified by many respondents in this study, suggests that many have given up trying to take counter-active measures against the hegemonic forms of masculinity prevailing in their schools (Connell, 1989, 1995, 2000) and encouraging the majority of boys to shun involvement in singing for fear of homophobic bullying (Koza, 1994, Hall, 2005, 2009, Harrison, 2009).

#### *6.52 Singing in the Focus Schools*

According to documentary evidence, classroom singing was a common feature in all three departments but in Seaside Town and Rural Country it appeared to be a formal activity in which all were expected to participate whereas in Suburban Street it was as an optional method of pupil performance as part of other projects. Nevertheless singing was only observed in one lesson in Rural Country where it was unrelated to any

curriculum work and featured as a 10 minute ‘filler’ activity. This seems to support information emerging from both survey respondents in this study and recent school inspections (Ofsted, 2012) suggesting a scarcity of class singing in many secondary schools, even in early KS3 years:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

The HoD gathers the pupils around the piano to sing a quaint, primary school-like song that has lots of repetitive verses called ‘I sat next to the duchess at tea’. Some of the boys appear rather embarrassed, especially the growlers whose voices are breaking, although I also notice two boys who had previously behaved poorly, singing with gusto and enjoying themselves – perhaps as the activity is notation-free and not chair bound. All the girls seem to be making a reasonable effort but it is obviously in a much more comfortable vocal range for them. At one point the class attempts to sing as a two-part round but the girls over-power the boys, whose line consequently disappears. This group singing appears to be a fun activity, aimed at releasing some of the teacher-pupil tension that has built up earlier in the lesson; the students seem happy to be out of their seats but do not seem to be having a very meaningful musical experience, just a bit of a laugh. Indeed it later struck me that using singing in this way (i.e. as a placatory reward after more musically challenging activities) might also be contributing to its demise further along the line since it becomes seen as a frivolous and unimportant area of the curriculum.

***6.53 Pupils on Singing***

Girls’ and boys’ attitudes towards singing in school were markedly different. Although most of those having voice lessons and attending choirs were girls (see Chapter 10), none at KS3 specifically mentioned their liking for this activity in interview (whether it was either taken as read or not as popular as one might have assumed is impossible to say). Indeed only KS4 girls from Seaside Town mentioned it favourably:

**Jade (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I like learning new songs and doing the whole group thing... I want to be singing all the time in music.

**Alicia (Seaside Town/BTEC):** ... most of the girls in school like singing a lot...  
Several boys also suggested that singing was universally popular with girls:

**James (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Well I can't sing... but I think girls love it...

**Josh (Rural Country/Yr8):** Boys like using the instruments more and girls like to sing...

*Seaside Town Year 8 boys' discussion*

**Tony:** ... some girls like singing much more...

**Kemal:** A lot of them sing...

**AG:** And what about you boys and singing – do you do very much?

*(Chorus of 'No!' and some giggling.)*

**Tony:** Well I like making up raps and that... having a little muck around in that way...

**Wayne:** I might sing in the shower but only then...

**Samuel:** It's just more of a girl's thing...

Two KS3 girls and a group of KS4 Seaside Town girls appeared very aware of boys' reticence about this activity unless it involved more macho forms of expression:

**Chloe (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Well they get embarrassed... 'cos we were making up a song... and they didn't help us sing... they'd only do rapping...

**Arjana (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I think that some of the boys love doing rap and beat-boxing though.

*Seaside Town BTEC girls' discussion*

**Paula:** They clearly prefer playing instruments to singing...

**Katie:** They don't really like singing...

**Jade:** Not all of them like singing and some of them really don't want to...

**Chantelle:** I don't think that any of them learn singing...

**Jade:** ... boys are not as interested in it as the girls...

Most of the boys expressed strongly negative views about participating in singing not only indicating that it was naturally preferred by girls but also that those boys who openly enjoyed it were liable to accusations of homosexuality (Koza, 1994, Hall, 2005, 2009, Harrison, 2007, 2009) or at the very least sexual naïvity (Ashley, 2006). The following discussion was typically representative:

***Suburban Street Year 9 boys' discussion***

**AG:** Do you sing in school?

**Bradley:** No... and I never would 'cos people call you choir boy and stuff...

**AG:** So what are people really saying when they call you choirboy?

**Morris:** Well they're trying to say that boys shouldn't sing ...

**Bradley:** Girls pay more attention to it and boys just... don't do anything basically... girls will like singing and stuff like that... boys shouldn't be able to sing because it's gay... (*All laugh and chorus, 'Yeah!'*)

**James:** Yeah... boys who sing are gay...

**AG:** Are you telling me that all the RnB and rap artists are gay?

**Bradley:** But rap artists don't sing... it's completely different...

**AG:** But lots of RnB artists sing properly... do they appear gay in their videos?

**Morris:** ... But they sort of talk in their videos as well...

**AG:** So rap is OK for boys to do but not RnB?

**James:** Yeah... we think it's rubbish anyway...

**Morris:** Yeah it's rubbish...

**AG:** So are you saying that males can only rap and not sing?

**Morris:** Like Will Young... he sings and he's gay...

**Bradley:** He's scary 'cos he's got a high voice...

**AG:** Justin Timberlake sings in a high voice and he's not gay...

**Morris:** Yeah, but he dresses gay...

**Bradley:** I really like singing... but only in the shower... only for me to hear.

This exchange revealed the external pressures felt by these boys: singing remained a private and secret pleasure (Welch et. al., 2009) and public performance was only acceptable if it lay within the confines of macho musical genres and vocal modes.

Boys made just three positive comments overall; two were from musically able individuals at Rural Country (one with extra-curricular interests in musical theatre and

the other a highly talented instrumentalist) and one from Seaside Town (who was an outstanding vocalist and Junior Exhibitionist at the Royal Opera House). This particular boy's effect upon class singing was interesting since his positive lead allowed others to follow his example without fear of being mocked. It was also notable that he managed to be both popular and musically successful, since his outstanding ability allowed him to successfully deflect attention away from the feminine-gendered delineations associated with singing that normally prevail when boys participate (Green: 1997: 187).

### *Seaside Town Year 7 boys' discussion*

**Henry:** I do singing and performance at the royal opera house...

**Justin:** He sings like an angel... (*He does an operatic impression and all laugh.*)

**Colin:** I'm also surprised that ... well I actually think that the boys in our class now sing better than the girls... 'cos they don't participate so much as we do... but I think that is quite unusual.

**AG:** Why is that?

**Colin:** 'Cos the girls aren't exactly that bothered...

**Shane:** We can sing and we're not embarrassed... but I think that's quite unusual... normally girls are better at it...

## **6.6 Informal Methods of Performing**

During pupil discussions, the use of non teacher-directed informal practices appeared very popular with a number of male students (but just a handful of girls) whilst working in friendship groups was championed by both sexes. Former research confirms that boys are more likely to want to work independently and to employ their own ideas rather than use teacher-provided stimuli (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, 2002a, Wright 2001) and this may well stem from an established masculine inheritance concerning extemporisation within the wider musical world.

This issue has become increasingly pertinent since the 1970s as pop music has gradually assumed greater importance in the music curriculum alongside a realisation that informal methods are apposite in its transmission. As previously discussed (see section 4.13) the Musical Futures project has been at the forefront of investigating new ways of delivering the music curriculum via the creation of a third environment in which young people can take control over their own learning without the need for



constant supervision. Musical Futures thus involves ‘a mind-shift in the dynamics between teaching/learning, providing/engaging, listening/responding’ (Price, 2007: 10).

Of the initial projects commissioned to explore approaches that might improve young people’s participation and quality of musical experiences, it was that based in 22 Hertfordshire schools that has the most bearing upon this study. It attempted to address problems surrounding Year 9 pupils, who are traditionally perceived by their teachers as being more disengaged with school music, especially if not intending to continue at KS4. Research outcomes suggested that two principles were imperative in maintaining pupils’ positive engagement with music; firstly to informalise the way that music was taught, and secondly to personalise the nature of the opportunities on offer<sup>33</sup>.

As a consequence, Green (2006: 106), whose philosophies underpinned this early research, suggested five criteria necessary for the raising of *all* pupils’ motivation:

- Pupils should choose the music that they would like to work with rather than have it imposed upon them;
- Copying by ear should be the primary method of musical transmission rather than verbal and written cues;
- Group work, involving peer-discussion, copying and sharing, should negate any need for formal guidance from an authority figure;
- The assimilation of skills must be recognised as haphazard and not sequential as in the formal realm;
- A natural integration of listening, composing and performing should exist as part of overall creativity without the formal separation of musical reception and musical production.

Most importantly for educators, the demands of this project called for a huge shift away from traditional pedagogical practices. Teachers were instructed to stand back whilst observing pupils self and peer-teaching, only offering guidance and assistance when specifically asked to do so. Despite participant teachers’ initial insecurities about using such methods, many later identified them as having positively promoted pupils’ independent learning, self-esteem, confidence and organisational skills whilst also increasing motivation and consequently enhancing learning outcomes (Hallam et al., 2011, D’Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014).

Similarly research into student voices (Jaffurs, 2004, Burton, 2010, Shervington,

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<sup>33</sup> These principles were later extended to pupils working in composition as well as performing whilst they were also applied to musical learning in unfamiliar genres, in particular classical music (see Green, 2008, Chapter 7, pp.149-180).

2010, Hallam et al, 2011, Zeserson et al., 2014) suggests that all pupils strongly favour developing their musical identities by performing with friends in bands, without any structured frameworks and using a wide range of credible instruments as exemplified in Musical Futures pedagogies; indeed some indicated that they would even prefer music to be withdrawn from the formal curriculum so that it could be explored more extensively in out of school hours (Burton, 2010).

## **6.7 Informal Methods of Performing in this Study**

Although no questions were specifically asked about such practices, the importance of informal learning to boys was substantiated in this study. Just 16 teachers commented and their remarks were exclusively about boys. Meanwhile 25 out of 33 KS3 students' statements came from boys (across all year groups and schools) as did 15 of the 17 KS4 responses.

### *6.71 Teachers on Informal Methods of Performing*

The main thrust of teachers' arguments concerned boys' greater need to engage with the styles of music that had a history of employing informal learning methods:

***School 12:*** Boys appear happier to learn music by ear – this could be something to do with the genre of music studied, boys tending to be more pop orientated.

***School 30:*** Boys will often prefer to play by ear or to be shown what to play.

***School 51:*** Boys generally work by ear, using guitar for example, whereas girls struggle to remember ideas in this way...

***School 52:*** Many boys play guitar and are very keen on this – they like practising, rehearsing and just jamming.

***School 77:*** The number of boys taking part in informal activities is high. We have 10 practice rooms and have kids in every lunch time to practice and yet I can go two weeks without seeing a single girl asking to use a room!

### 6.72 *Informal Methods of Performing in the Focus Schools*

Although no classroom activities of a truly informal nature were seen in any department observations, documents from Suburban Street indicated that such practices were common to some of the KS3 projects. Anecdotes from departmental staff in all schools also revealed that many informal groups rehearsed in out-of-class hours although these bands were exclusively identified as consisting of boys.

The two oldest teacher-interviewees, who also confessed greater reverence for the Western canon, conveyed the greatest levels of suspicion about informal practices. Mr. Hayward, despite having learnt the piano informally, not only expressed extreme dislike of them but also their associated instruments which he deemed to be inferior in terms of their ability to inform a pupil's musical understanding of melody and harmony:

**AG:** Do your early experiences make you quite tolerant of kids in the classroom who want to learn that way rather than through formal instrumental lessons?

**Mr. Hayward (Suburban Street):** No! In fact exactly the opposite! Particularly with the peripheral instruments... electric guitar, drums... I am very insistent that kids actually do learn properly, and do their grades like in Rock School... I think on electric guitar that they tend to say lets learn another riff this week and I'm not sure that there's rigour involved in that like there is in learning other instruments... that does bother me...

Mr. Brewer argued likewise, even suggesting that to compose by exploring notes that just 'sounded right' rather than through a conventional, knowledge-based understanding of diatonic harmony, was in some way wrong:

**Mr. Brewer (Rural Country):** So they learn random guitar chords but they don't know what constitutes those chords... they do it because they like the sound of it and just blindly without any kind of intellectual skill... yes, sometimes there are going to be happy accidents I suppose... but education is surely about people becoming informed...

Other teachers had greater tolerance of a wide range of performance practices including two from Seaside Town who indicated that they lacked the required power, in

terms of decisions-making and budget control, to instigate change:

**Mrs Asaaf (Seaside Town):** In a current Year 8 group I decided to get things going and involve boys more by doing something totally different. I'd been on a Musical Futures course and was so inspired that I decided to trial something. We did the song 'Perfect' by Pink in groups working informally, with each producing their own interpretation of it. It went down really well with boys and girls alike... I was amazed at how well it all went down.

**AG:** So do you see Musical Futures as a way forward in the school?

**Mrs A:** Yes definitely... but I can't see it happening until the resources are in place so that it can be done successfully... I need to convince the rest of the department to apply for funding since we'll need things like drum-machines. It could really change the dynamics of the department but the problem is that those who don't work with KS3 don't have to confront issues like boys' bad behaviour and not wanting to do the subject; *they* teach students who have chosen music...

Mr Cooper likewise suggested that it was hard to effect vital change in music departments when the power of the HoD was absolute:

**Mr Cooper (Seaside Town):** Kids in many schools and here as well... they're mostly not very engaged with the learning process... and their relationship with music is through popular music... predominantly RnB and that kind of thing... they are very much into a narrow range of specific things. My argument is that we should be engaging them in that first and then trying to deliver a curriculum via it... so you've got them on board and then you can explore various other things... I've never had success in trying to implement that stuff though... I can't come in and upturn everything...

### *6.73 Boys and Girls on Methods of Informal Performing*

Although students of both sexes commented in this area, the number of boys' statements far outweighed girls' and primarily focused upon the pleasures provided by musical of autonomy, both during and outside of lesson time<sup>34</sup>:

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<sup>34</sup> For further insights into pupils' views on musical autonomy see Green, (2008: pp 102-110).

**Sam (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I just like playing around on the keyboard... if we're not doing that then it gets boring...

**Nat (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... making things up and stuff on the piano... I can and do enjoy doing it.

**Jonathan (Rural Country/Yr7):** I started a band with my friend recently, and we go into that room there (*points*)... he does vocals and guitar and I do guitar...

**Steven (Rural Country/Yr7):** I know loads of weird songs really... what happens is... if there's a musical instrument I see how weird a song I can make up on it. This friend had a violin here and we were mucking about on it... I made a country tune even though I didn't really know what I was doing.

In a Year 9 Rural Country observation, evidence of boys indulging in self and peer-teaching by ear whilst ignoring the required performance notation was rife:

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**AG:** (*To the bass player*) Do you learn bass guitar then?

**Stuart:** No, I've just picked it up on my own.

**AG:** So you worked the part out by ear have you?

**Stuart:** Yeah...

**AG:** (*To other guitarist*) And what are you going to play on your guitar – chords or the main tune?

**Liam:** Chords, I don't really play guitar – I copy him and he shows me stuff...

**AG:** How did you choose who played what instrument?

**Trevor and Paul (shouting):** FIGHT!!! ...

**Trevor:** Yeah we have a scrap about it. (*General sniggering in background.*)

**Ian:** We all sort of worked it out in the end – we know we've got to have all the parts so we have to agree on something ...

**AG:** Do you always go for the same type of instrument if you can?

**Stuart:** No – I don't always want to play guitar. I prefer to play drums but we can't have them in this piece...

**AG:** Do you learn drums then?

**Stuart:** No I've taught myself – I've got them at home... I like teaching myself stuff...

Some, but certainly not all, boys' informal learning took place solely in the home environment and this appeared more likely amongst Year 8 pupils and above, potentially indicating a greater distancing between 'my' music and 'school' music as KS3 progressed (Bennett, 2000, Tarrant et al., 2001b, Tarrant et al., 2002):

**Kemal (Seaside Town/Yr8):** Well my brother's doing music at college and he used to play the drums... but he doesn't any more... so I use his drum kit a lot...

**Matt (Rural Country/Yr9):** I like messing about on guitar... not in school...

**James (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I have a keyboard at home and teach myself...

**Dan (Suburban Street/Yr9):** A couple of years ago I decided to play guitar at home... 'cos my brother could already play it... I got some pointers from him ... he still plays it and he shows me stuff... I pick it up and copy what he does...

**Joseph (Seaside Town/BTEC):** At home I teach myself things... I like to work out tunes... on guitar, keyboard, and I'm trying to work on the flute... it was my dad's and he gave it to me... and I also have a harmonica which he also gave to me a few years ago... I just like creating different pieces... sometimes I'll try to copy other people's stuff... but I do like to invent something of my own too...

Although four girls also mentioned their experiences in this area, none did so in relation to the school environment, suggesting that girls may consider such practices inappropriate to use within formal arenas. It is also possible that they may feel intimidated by boys' band rehearsals that tended to dominate departmental resources and spaces during extra-curricular hours:

**Holly (Rural Country/Yr9):** I play the drums at the weekend... I don't have lessons but I've got a set at home...

**Grace (Rural Country/Yr9):** Yeah I play the guitar... and I can play and like jam and stuff with my dad at the weekends.

**Charlotte (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I was learning piano and guitar for a while... I wasn't having lessons...I was teaching myself... I can do some really good things...

**Chanel (Seaside Town/Yr7):** ... and then my brother played the drums and he taught me lots of stuff... and my dad's best friend taught me how to do some stuff on guitar...

Three boys also mentioned that there were many ways to learn music via informal means and that school often restricted these options:

**Samuel (Seaside Town/Yr8):** You should just be able play around with the instruments here... and accidentally find out what you're good at...

**Kemal (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I think that people learn in different ways in music... I mean you can learn a lot more by teaching yourself than somebody else telling you what to do in school.

**Tony (Seaside Town/Yr8):** ... at home you've got as much time as you want to practice and get better... at school you've only got an hour a week... it's limited.

BTEC pupils did not specifically compare informal versus formal musical practices but this may be explained by the greater flexibility and fluidity of the courses. The following remarks typify their perceptions of informal learning in class:

**Jenna (Suburban Street/BTEC):** ... everyone does their thing individually...

**Lee (Suburban Street/BTEC):** : In BTEC you can do all sorts of stuff yourself and it's free... My brother's got some decks so I like mixing stuff... you can do that in BTEC...

**Freddy (Suburban Street/BTEC):** : I mean BTEC's not that strict... you can play around with stuff...

However there appeared to be a clearer divide between formal and informal music-making amongst GCSE students where the latter was considered as far less important in the wider world although not necessarily to the individuals themselves<sup>35</sup>:

**Simon (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I play in a band with some of my friends so I write a few songs... it's an indie band... I play bass guitar and rhythm guitar...

**AG:** Why didn't you tell me about that when I asked about your musical experiences earlier?

**Simon:** I dunno... I thought you'd only want to know about the classical stuff. I play piano in the band too.... there's three of us and we've got a studio in the back garden to practice in...

Notably one boy also stated that he would prefer not to be studying music formally:

**Anthony (Rural Country/GCSE):** I really think that music should be just for fun... like playing at home rather than doing exams and stuff.

## 6.8 Pupils Engaging in Group Work

As many of the informal practices observed in school revolved around pupils engaging in group work it is important to explore some of the gendered behaviours observed in this respect. Indeed Musical Futures case studies suggest that students repeatedly emphasised the importance of group work in contributing to their overall enjoyment and autonomy (Hallam, 2011: 21). Notably 84% in the first stage of the research believed that they worked more effectively in friendship groups with girls agreeing most strongly (2011: 20). However many pupils were also able to identify the sorts of difficulties experienced in group collaboration including the advantages and disadvantages of working with friends and how these could be best overcome.

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<sup>35</sup> Jaffurs (2004) likewise found that none of the boys in the out-of-school garage band that she observed had ever mentioned their membership to either their class or instrumental music teachers. More recently Zeserson et al. (2014) note that this disconnection between music in and out of the classroom can adversely affect pupils' musical progression.



The likelihood of students working with close friends is also an important consideration in this study since the majority of groups observed in the focus schools worked with others of the same sex. Outcomes from an investigation into how gender affected students' collaboration regarding the performance of original pop music (Abramo, 2011) indicated that boys' and girls' behaviours were radically different when engaging. Notably, all-boy groups communicated predominantly by non-verbal means, especially via musical cues and gestures, whilst girls mainly used verbal dialogue which were separate from their musical rehearsing. Tensions and dilemmas were mostly evident in mixed groups where the two processes often clashed, causing argument, confusion and even the alienation of particular individuals. Abramo notes that the informal pedagogies currently used in education (and as exemplified in Britain by the Musical Futures model) are primarily based upon the study of boys' popular music practices and not girls' (2011: 37) and consequently they have the potential to increase girls' disaffection and to inhibit their willingness to participate.

#### *6.81 Pupils Engaging in Group Work in this Study*

Only six teachers commented on group work in this study, perhaps indicating that it has become so much a part of everyday pedagogy that it no longer warrants mention, despite its prominence during fieldwork observations and some notable differences emerging in terms of its gendered outcomes. In contrast, group work was viewed as an important method of learning by KS3 students who contributed 35 statements; 22 from boys and 13 from girls. Around two-thirds (24) of these came from Year 8/9 pupils, potentially indicating that this way of working becomes more dominant as KS3 progresses. However at KS4 far fewer responses were made (10) and most emanated from Seaside Town, despite evidence of its use during fieldwork (and as in the other two schools).

#### *6.82 Teachers on Group Work*

The few teachers who commented mostly agreed that KS3 girls were more able to cope with this way of working due to their better interpersonal skills however at KS4 greater equity was evident:

**School 12:** Girls are better at KS3 - managing their time and producing work that meets the requirements of the task but there's no difference at KS4.

**School 30:** Boys tend to be more interested if performing involves playing in bands. They excel in this respect at KS4.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls like to work in groups – it's safety in numbers – rather than being the centre of attention. They may disagree a bit over things but in the end they tend to compromise – elect a leader, agree who is doing what and get on with the task. When girls are unhappy with things then they tend to sulk or just remove themselves from the situation – leaving the task to be done somehow by the others. Boys argue more in groups work, they don't negotiate as well. If someone is unhappy the whole group falls apart – nothing gets done!

#### *6.83 Boys and Girls on Group Work*

Of the 46 statements, all were very positive except one (from a girl) who preferred working on her own. Several pupils enjoyed the possibility of interacting with others possessing complementary skills, in order to raise the standards of their own work:

**Abbie (Suburban Street/Yr9):** We like practising on the keyboards together...

**Morris (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Well I like working in groups... or with partners... because you can get help from other people...

**Nat (Suburban Street/Yr9):** ... and it's great when you know things and you can also help other people...

Only one girl indicated that group work could be frustrating if she had to work with pupils of lesser musical ability:

**Sophie (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... but sometimes when we're practising, a few people don't get it... and we wanna just carry on but then we don't get as much time... because people just don't get it.

Classroom observations provided fruitful insights into the gendering of group work since in all departments it mostly involved all-male or all-female groups. A couple of boys explained some of the problems arising when working in mixed groups, particularly in that girls were too conventional and unadventurous:

**Ashley (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Well girls are just too sensible... they should loosen up a little bit... they start telling you which note to play and shout at you and give gobby (mouthy) comments... boys sort of mess about a little bit...

**Dwight (Seaside Town/Yr8):** ... if I get put in a group with girls I don't actually talk to them...

The sort of disharmony that might have been anticipated by outcomes from recent research suggesting that boys and girls communicate differently in such situations (Abramo, 2011) was not evident in the only mixed group observed:

***Rural Country Year 9 mixed discussion (during a classroom observation)***

**AG:** You're the only group of mixed boys and girls here. Why is that?

**Louise and Davina together:** We're good mates/We like working together...

**AG:** So how did you choose who does what? Do you have to bring your instrument in?

**Louise:** (*Flautist*) We don't have to, but sir likes it if we do...

(*Meanwhile the boys are distracted and messing around on their instruments.*)

**AG:** Boys, can I talk to you a minute? You're both on percussion – so did you volunteer, or get put on that, or what?

**Ross:** I got put on it...

**AG:** Would you rather do something else?

**Bobby:** No I don't mind.

**Ross:** I don't either.

**AG:** What about if you were asked to do these other parts, like the tune?

**Bobby:** No – I don't want to do that...

**AG:** Why is that?

**Ross:** 'cos we're rubbish at it... we can't... the girls are better...

It is important to note that the boys in this group were very docile, extremely disinterested in the task and had clearly surrendered all responsibilities to the girls. Whether such accord would have been evident in a mixed group in which boys wished to be more proactive is an issue here. Similarly some of the all-boy groups did not display the levels of mutual collaboration suggested by Abramo (2011) or indeed the camaraderie that many of them insisted always existed when boys worked together. The following example shows a group who were not only competitive with one another but also insinuated that having girls in the group would be both divisive yet beneficial:

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**AG:** Why don't you get together in a group with any girls?

**Brendan:** Because when it's just us we can do what we want...

**Michael:** ... without them telling us what to do. (*Chorus of agreement from all.*)

**Peter:** Basically girls are better than boys in lots of ways - they can concentrate.

**AG:** Why? What do you mean?

**Peter:** Girls just act all girly and don't like what we say...

**Andy:** Stop being sexist! (*Said in a tongue in cheek way.*)

**AG:** But if there were girls in the group do you think your end results would be better – the work that you produce?

**Liam:** Well it would be better in some ways because they'd organise us properly and stop us messing about.

**AG:** Why can't you stop yourself from messing about?

**Peter:** Because we can't listen to each other – everyone wants to be top dog.

**All boys:** No I want to be top dog/so do I/me too etc. (*Lots of laughter follows.*)

In contrast, many girls' groups appeared more cohesive and supportive of each other:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 9 observation***

I talk to a group of three girls rehearsing in a well-organised way in a corner of the main classroom. One is playing the bass part on keyboard and two perform upper parts on xylophones. They explain that they decided who played which part by agreeing who had the best skills for the job. They say they can each play their parts individually but putting it together needs more work. They appear well-organised and helpful to one another when encountering difficulties.

KS4 pupils' statements about group work were exclusively positive and less gender-focused, suggesting that mixed participation was the norm:

**Aiden (Rural Country/GCSE):** I really like performing together in ensembles.

**Jade (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I like doing the whole group thing with everyone.

**Miles (Seaside Town/BTEC):** Playing together helps makes bonds... in the end we all try to co-operate to make the music sound better than it was before... sometimes little arguments break out... someone is playing a bit out of tune and I pick it up... or I'm playing out of tune and they'll pick it up.

Nevertheless a KS4 observation of group work in Seaside Town indicated that things were not as harmonious as the pupils' comments might have denoted. Indeed boys were far more critical of all group work practices involving either sex, in both constructive and destructive ways:

***Diary extract: Seaside Town BTEC observation***

The boys are loudly derogatory, not only about their own performances in the ensemble but also those of the girls'. 'Is Katie actually even singing?' says Jacob. 'No she always mimes!' cruelly shouts another boy. In contrast the girls are not openly critical of anyone; although they are annoyed by the boys' comments they hold back from indulging in reactive behaviour.

## **6.9 Summary and Conclusions**

This chapter has examined the history of performing and its relationship to gender and school music with reference to relevant issues emerging from the study's fieldwork. It has explored the data in terms of classroom performing, both instrumentally and vocally, alongside some of the key pedagogical practices that are utilised in its conveyance. Outcomes regarding instrumental performing reveal that:

- Respondents, as in L. Green's research (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), remained primarily focused upon excellence in these areas. Much of the discourse concerned pupils' success in extra-curricular music-making, potentially

indicating its perceived greater value both in school and the outside world. This was not true of the students however, who mostly preferred to speak of their experiences within the classroom.

- The majority of current teachers, as in the earlier survey, believed girls and boys to be equally successful in this activity however some still perceived girls to be superior performers, although fewer than in 1993. Since greater numbers of girls tend to take part in formal extra-curricular activities (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001) this was an unsurprising outcome.
- Those currently arguing that boys were more successful suggested that this was due to their increased involvement with popular genres and related practices.
- Many current teachers, as in the earlier survey, were aware that girls and boys mostly preferred to learn different instruments and that these divided along strongly gendered lines in compliance with traditional patterning; girls tended towards voice, keyboards, gentler woodwind or strings and boys predominantly chose guitars, drums and technological sources<sup>36</sup>.
- Some also cited the suitability of traditional instruments for girls, whom they believed to possess attributes enabling them to cope better with the demands of formal learning (such as reading notation). Others noted different success outcomes according to the instruments in use (girls tending being more able vocally and on keyboards and boys on guitars and percussion).
- Some teachers suggested that boys became more interested in performing, and consequently raised their standards, as KS3 progressed, catching up with the girls by its close. Reasons for this appear to be diverse and include the expanding numbers participating in learning rock/pop instruments alongside the constant influence of the over-arching masculine delineation of music that exists in wider society (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).
- Students' responses confirmed teachers' perceptions about gendered instrumental preferences. However some boys were also emphatic in their identification of certain instruments as being solely for girls, such as flute and violin (O'Neill & Boulton, 1996) and expressed their wish to use pop and technological instruments to the exclusion of all else.
- Students were very positive about instrumental performing in class. Girls were slightly more so, yet conversely they also displayed some negativity in terms

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<sup>36</sup> See footnote 10, page 46 for relevant literature.

embarrassment or inadequacy when playing in front of others. Boys were more likely to dislike activities because of the instruments that they were forced to use (shunning classroom percussion which they perceived as inappropriate in favour of wanting to use guitars and drum-kits) whilst also demonstrating bravado in their performances, however poorly presented (Green, 1997).

- The narrowing of perceptions (by boys and girls alike) concerning what it means to be a musician was evident in this study (Lamont & Tarrant 2001, Lamont, 2002, O' Neill, 2002). Students appeared to become increasingly critical of their abilities as KS3 progressed, comparing themselves disparagingly with those peers whose skills outstripped their own (and who mostly accessed extra-curricular music education). This tendency was least prevalent in Seaside Town where notably there was no programme of extra-curricular tuition until KS4.

Outcomes regarding singing suggested that:

- Singing (as in the earlier study) was identified by teachers and pupils alike as the most extremely feminine-gendered activity on the curriculum (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, Hall 2005, 2009). Boys were very negative about it whilst girls, although more positive, were not exclusively so.
- Most teachers believed girls to be far more successful whilst some also suggested that their liking for singing in school increased across KS3 whereas boys' had already declined dramatically before their arrival at secondary school (Welsh et al., 2009). However comments from girls did not particularly support this contention and suggested a marked deterioration in their interest also occurred, if slightly later than that of boys'.
- Teachers suggested that boys' negativity towards participating in singing was compounded by two problems; voice-breaking during adolescence (although this was not supported by pupils' comments) and homophobic accusations (strongly confirmed by boys and girls alike).
- Some boys stated that all aspects of school-organised singing were inappropriate in that they inevitably involved unsuitable choices of material and effeminate ways of using the male voice, automatically triggering peer bullying (Koza, 1994, Hall, 2005, 2009, Harrison, 2009).
- Most teachers and pupils agreed that boys and girls preferred to sing different types of music. Girls were presumed to like more traditional genres, particularly

chart pop and slower ballads (DeNora, 2000). Boys were said to prefer styles in which more macho ways of using their voices could be utilised such as rap, hip-hop and heavy rock genres. Boys agreed with this analysis but were afforded limited opportunity to express themselves in such ways (potentially because the misogyny and homophobia that is frequently expressed in macho genres, strongly inhibits their classroom usage).

- The sex of teachers in relationship to role-modelling was not deemed to have any measurable effect upon how well boys reacted. In the small amount of class singing observed (notably in Year 7), all involved male teachers directing, whilst boys participated as willingly as girls; however this is a scant amount of evidence upon which to base any assumptions.

Important outcomes regarding formal versus informal pedagogies included that:

- Pupils confirmed that informal group work was very popular with both sexes (Hallam et. al., 2011) however whilst some teachers recognised the importance of such practices to boys, none referred to girls in this respect. Meanwhile the handful of teachers acknowledging the need to give boys more time and space to pursue their learning in this way were outnumbered by the majority, who appeared unaware of such requirements or suspicious of the procedures and practices that such pedagogies may entail.
- Some respondents argued that boys often produced superior work when allowed to utilise preferred popular genres and their associated instruments and informal practices. This was particularly so at KS4 where their musical products were deemed to be of a far higher standard than those of girls by some teachers (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997) despite no provision of data to substantiate such claims.
- The majority of positive pupil comments about informal practices were from boys who also wished to utilise the instruments that they most associated with learning in this way (especially guitars and drums). Only boys were critical of formal instrumental learning and several expressed a strong wish to work completely informally, being able to choose the music content, instruments and procedures that they were to utilise with minimal teacher intervention (Green 2002a, 2006, 2008).
- Those girls involved in such practices mostly did so away from school and there



appeared to be a clearer divide between informal, home learning and formal, classroom learning for them. In addition it appears that boys' dominance of departmental resources and facilities for band rehearsals may be off-putting too.

- Most pupils divided along gendered lines when participating in group work due to the opposing ways in which they wished to work and the different sorts of music in which they wanted to engage (Abramo, 2011). Boys frequently described girls as bossy, task-orientated, inflexible and ballad-focused whilst girls believed boys to be disorganised, haphazard, argumentative and intent upon making fast, loud music.
- Teachers and pupils agreed that girls often achieved better outcomes at KS3 when involved in group work because they structured their work incrementally, and had better inter-personal skills through which they collaborated rather than argued. However both teachers and boys confirmed that males often produced superior work if allowed to utilise popular genres and their associated instruments and practices, especially at KS4 (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).

## **Chapter 7: Composing, Technology and Gender**

This chapter examines the role that gender plays in the expression of beliefs and behaviours surrounding composing and using technology. It initially investigates the history of gendered traditions in school composing and explores all data in the light of its implications. This is followed by a review of more recent developments in the related use of technology, with specific reference to its gendered implications, alongside analysis of all congruent data.

### **7.1 Gendered Traditions in School Composing**

For much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the act of composing was not part of the average pupils' music education. Despite its promotion by the 'creativity' movement of the 1960s and 70s (Paynter & Ashton, 1970) as the pinnacle of all experiences via which pupils might develop their musicianship, relatively few actually experienced its educational impact (Green, 1988). Indeed, KS4 students only began to encounter composition as part of the new GCSE examination in the late 1980s (DES, 1986, QCA, 2007), whilst those under the age of 14 rarely engaged in it until the introduction of a statutory music curriculum for England and Wales in the early 1990s (DES, 1992).

Composing as a general class activity was undoubtedly in its infancy at the time of Green's study (1993) thus all references to it were based on GCSE pupil' engagement since it had yet to be fully established at KS3. Nevertheless, she noticed that girls' and boys' self-images were very different when participating. Although girls were neither completely unsuccessful at, or negative about, composition, many were perceived as teacher-reliant, lacking confidence and tending towards being over-critical of their work. Teachers characterised girls as being hard-working but conformist, conservative and, 'wanting in those attributes of autonomy and creativity which are definitive aspects of the construction of genius as a male prerogative' (Green, 1997: 228).

In marked contrast, Green noted that boys were frequently praised for their abilities in this discipline whilst appearing more confident, rational and autonomous too (their greater identification with the male as composer and improviser no doubt contributing to their positivity). As a consequence, they were more likely to want to work independently and to employ their own ideas rather than use teacher-provided stimuli (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997, Wright, 2001, Armstrong, 2008, 2011).

Green suggests that girls find it hard to celebrate their musical creations because (unlike boys) there is little popular recognition of female composition in the wider society and in which they can find themselves positively reflected (1997: 218). Despite the success of a few notable exceptions, the major works of Western art music and the discourses surrounding them, are the products of male structures and conventions that exclude acknowledgement of women's contributions to the field (see section 1.33). consequently most people remain unaware of the history of female composition and women and girls fail to see where they might fit into this male-dominated terrain<sup>37</sup>.

Research by Charles (2004) concerning teachers and their pupils (aged 8-10 years) in a London primary school, reveals evidence of this 'macrocosmic' ideology being played out in the 'microcosmic' classroom from a very young age (2004: 274). Both teacher and pupil participants displayed entrenched assumptions about gender and composing (such as believing boys' music to be loud, fast, complex, experimental and egocentric but girls' to be soft, simplistic, safe, tentative and conformist) despite evidence to show that pupils' practices often contradicted these perceptions. Charles argues that children of this age have already learnt the discourses of gendered musical practices operating in the wider world despite not yet being fully socialised and this ideology powerfully affects their thinking, if not yet their actual behaviours. Meanwhile Armstrong's study of much older (KS4/5) pupils' engagement with composition when using music technology (see section 7.3), confirms that it continues to be overtly and inherently masculine-gendered in its construction, causing boys to continue to be perceived as superior in all respects (Armstrong, 2008, 2011).

## **7.2 Composing in this Study**

As in L. Green's research (1993), fewer statements were made by teachers about composing than performing (58 in all) but they revealed (as in the earlier study) a very high level of consensus concerning boys' and girls' attributes and behaviours when engaging. Pupils contributed 60 comments (33 from KS3 and 27 from KS4) with 33 boys and 27 girls responding. At KS3 around two-thirds (21) were from those attending the more composition-orientated Suburban Street and indicating the discipline's higher profile within this department's curriculum. Meanwhile around four-fifths (24) of GCSE students remarked upon composing whereas just three BTEC pupils did likewise.

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<sup>37</sup> See footnote 8, page 31 for relevant literature.

This is indicative of both its lack of relevance to students at Seaside Town but also the low levels of awareness amongst Suburban Street BTEC students that their music-making was based upon compositional procedures.

### *7.21 Teachers on Composing*

Legg's small-scale study of beginner teachers' perceptions of gender and the assessment of musical compositions (2010), proposes that masculine-gendered delineations continue to dominate our thinking about this discipline if surreptitiously. Its participants were introduced to Green's 1993 outcomes and in particular the idea that teachers mostly perceived boys as innovative and creative in composition but girls as conformist and lacking flair. All agreed that they found such ideas 'old-fashioned, if not repugnant' (Legg, 2010: 146), believing themselves and their contemporaries to hold less entrenched beliefs. However, when asked to identify the sex of the composers of 10 short extracts of 19<sup>th</sup> century music (piano miniatures and duo sonatas), the 16 respondents strongly agreed that three were composed by men, four by women and three were indeterminate (despite all having really being composed by women). Although respondents were not asked to provide reasons for their choices, when later required to mark the compositions according to criteria devised for use in public examinations, the highest aggregated marks were awarded to those compositions that they had previously identified as being by men. This occurred despite the participants having previously stated that gender was never a consciously considered factor in the assessment of their pupils' work.

Such outcomes highlight several important issues: firstly that the delineations associated with compositional success continue to be strongly masculine-gendered for teachers, age notwithstanding; secondly that most music educators remain unaware of the powerful effect that such associations exert upon their own judgements (which they sincerely believe to be impartial and free from any gender bias); and finally that it is important for the music teaching profession to become fully aware of this situation since its implications, especially regarding the fair assessment of girls' compositional products, are significant.

Data from this study (see section 4.2) also suggest that teachers believed that composition was predominantly popular amongst all KS3 pupils with around two-thirds (50) indicating no differences between girls' and boys' achievements. Meanwhile

numbers regarding girls as more successful had slightly increased when compared to replies from 1993 whilst those believing boys to be likewise had doubled. However many indicated that girls showed a greater liking for composing with instruments whilst boys preferred to utilise technology, an inclination that apparently increased by Year 9.

<b>Instr. Composition</b>	Yr 7	Boys Prefer=5	Equal Preference=55	Girls Prefer=12
<b>Tech. Composition</b>	Yr 7	Boys prefer=23	Equal Preference=55	Girls Prefer=0

<b>Instr. Composition</b>	Yr 9	Boys Prefer=5	Equal Preference=50	Girls Prefer=15
<b>Tech. Composition</b>	Yr 9	Boys prefer=31	Equal Preference=31	Girls Prefer=3

Of the 17 respondents indicating that there were no gender differences in either deed or outcome, the following sample represent the range of reasons supplied:

**School 3:** Composing is equally difficult for both.

**School 25:** As soon as they believe that they can compose there tends to be an equality of ability.

**School 64:** Differentiation is the key – my lessons have a range of options to ‘hook’ the interest and imagination of all pupils.

**School 78:** We teach composing skills suitable for both genders.

Just two respondents related success to an individual’s innate musical ability:

**School 69:** I have been teaching composition for 18 years and have not noticed that gender makes much difference; it is much more to do with musical experience.

**School 71:** This is related to musical talent and skills acquired – not gender.

Unfortunately it is impossible to ascertain whether equity really existed in these departments or whether inequality was simply not recognised by the respondents. One interviewed teacher admitted that he had never thought about the implications of this

issue, suggesting that a lack of consideration can create a corresponding lack of awareness of classroom dynamics:

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** And in terms of composing... I don't think that with any of our girls... it would cross their minds that composing wasn't for girls... in fact it's never even crossed my mind that composing wasn't for girls... but I suppose that it being a male-dominated profession is true... but when we're composing in the classroom... none of that has ever impinged upon us... we've never thought that way...

A further 13 respondents commented that although outcomes were similar, gendered behaviours were very different:

**School 7:** Girls' work is more structured but boys' is more ad hoc since they are reluctant to follow rules...

**School 40:** They have different styles – boys tend to use music IT whereas girls are more flexible and work using a combination of techniques and resources.

**School 68:** This varies with genre; boys produce more band based compositions and girls more orchestral/instrumental.

Changes were also noted across the secondary years by six respondents who argued that boys demonstrated far greater ability at KS4 and beyond:

**School 12:** Girls are better at KS3 level – working in groups, managing their time and producing work that meets the requirements of the task. However at GCSE boys tend to outperform the girls...

**School 22:** At KS3 girls are more successful in group work but boys produce better individual work at GCSE.

**School 23:** It depends on the individual however at GCSE boys have been more creative and logical when composing.

**School 30:** Boys are generally more creative at KS3 and will try out ideas. Girls are diligent and persevere in order to create the expected outcomes. At KS4 boys overwhelmingly dominate as so few girls choose to compose via the GCSE course (preferring to take BTEC Performing Arts as also offered by this school).

Despite these respondents having originally indicated that gendered success was similar, their subsequent explanations were often contradictory (as in L. Green's 1993 study); boys were seen as increasingly innovative and imaginative as they matured (although also less conformist too) whilst girls were described as hard-working but only able to produce dull outcomes<sup>38</sup>. Armstrong (2008, 2011) ascertains that many teachers actively admire, approve of, and encourage boys' deviant and non-conformist attitudes when composing although girls are mostly discouraged from acting likewise since such behaviour is deemed less culturally acceptable. Meanwhile boys' musical products, resulting from the greater degrees of autonomy, creativity and ingenuity that they are allowed to express, have greater value attributed to them. Many of the 20 teachers who regarded boys as more successful used similar vocabulary when describing them<sup>39</sup>:

**School 19:** Boys I have taught have generally had more flair for composition.

**School 48:** ... boys are better at improvising and through-composition.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Boys seem more imaginative and creative; they think outside the box and do what *they* think is right and to hell with anyone else – they want to do stuff that interests them, regardless of what teacher or peers think. They do need some limited rules in order to get started but not too many – they can't be completely restricted.

**School 74:** Boys are more willing to take risks in this area but it has to be quickly achieved as they are less able to develop ideas over time.

As Green noted amongst her respondents, the over-arching effect of the masculine delineation of composition appears dominant throughout these comments (1997: 216).

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<sup>38</sup> For comparative information about teachers and pupils views on composing in L. Green's earlier study (1997) see Chapter 8, pp.193-229.

<sup>39</sup> For examples of teachers using analogous language relating to Mathematics see Walkerdine (1998).

Eight teachers also noted boys' greater preferences for engaging in this discipline via informal practices:

*School 15:* Boys seem to prefer writing songs and original music, especially for the many rock bands in which they perform...

*School 17:* ... boys generally spend more time on composition between lessons at KS3 and thus become more adventurous composers at KS4/5.

*School 67:* Most of those who are better at composing are boys who play rock instruments and improvise.

Meanwhile of the seven ascertaining that girls were more successful at composing, they concurred that girls tended to be more mature, focused and organised in carrying out the act and consequently were likely to produce a final product that met with task requirements:

*School 9:* Girls take time over their compositions, share tasks, make alterations.

*School 44:* Boys need more structure in their work whereas girls can generally cope with the freedom that comes from composition.

*School 48:* Girls tend to be more thoughtful in the editing process...

*School 66:* They will concentrate longer on the organisational aspects...

*School 75:* Girls are more psychologically mature to deal with this at this time of their lives and thus achieve better results.

Only one teacher suggested that girls were innately more able although even this comment aligned girls' creativity with their parallel skills in self-organisation, structuring and performance outcomes. (Not one teacher mentioned the necessity of such requirements for boys' success.):



**School 36:** Girls are able to focus on tasks that are more creative. They like to experiment with sounds and they are able to structure phrases together. They are also better at performing their own work.

Finally, although teacher gender was rarely seen as a problem in this area, one respondent showed an awareness of deeper issues mentioning that it was important for pupils to see both men and women leading composition:

**School 24:** One of our targets has been to ensure mixed staffing in this area.

Despite this worthy objective, I would contend that the provision of positive role-modelling for girls is not necessarily a guarantee of success, particularly if departmental pedagogy utilises music technology in the main (as it increasingly appears to do in many schools). Armstrong (2011: 103) notes that females are generally perceived as being the beneficiaries of male technological know-how but not the dispensers; consequently a purely computer-mediated approach to composition tends to favour the male as expert within the classroom. Therefore if a female's technological contributions remain under-valued, regardless of her capabilities, it appears that she will be regarded as a less accomplished composer too.

### *7.22 Composing in the Focus Schools*

Field studies gleaned far more information about pupils' involvement in composing activities in Suburban Street where it was fully embedded into all aspects of the curriculum. However some limited evidence of KS3 composition was observed in both Rural Country (improvisation in a Year 8 gamelan lesson) and Seaside Town (via a creative composition lesson in Year 7). In terms of gendered behaviours, observations revealed clear differences between girls and boy when partaking in such activities. In a Year 7 lesson in which pupils were asked to provide a computer-generated musical accompaniment to a cartoon strip sequence, it was immediately noticeable that some boys wished to ditch the HoD's resources in favour of their own:

#### ***Diary extract: Suburban Street Year 7 observation***

As soon as pupils set to work, two pairs of boys ask whether they have to use

this story board or whether they can substitute it with another. The HoD tells them that this is not possible at that moment (although he informed me that as the project develops pupils do get the opportunity to construct their own). The boys appear disappointed at not being able to develop music from their own sources. It is also noticeable that during the initial 10 minute period many girls' hands are raised in order to ask the HoD whether he thinks that a particular idea is suitable; however not one boy checks out any of their ideas with the teacher in order to seek approval.

Although Armstrong (2011) indicates that at KS4/5 few students of either sex preferred to work with teacher-generated ideas, since they forbid complete personal ownership of the product, it seems likely, as demonstrated in this observation, that males' disaffection with such methods begins at a much earlier age (Wright, 2001).

Further evidence of boys' greater levels of confidence and autonomy in composition was provided during a Year 9 lesson at the same school. The activity concerned pupils constructing a blues piece which had to contain a number of previously demonstrated stylistic conventions:

***Diary extract: Suburban Street Year 9 observation***

**10.20:** I talk to a pair of boys and ask to hear their composition. They are very confident about how good their work is despite it failing to meet the basic requirements demanded by the teacher; the melody line wanders aimlessly and lacks any sense of phrasing. When I ask whether they could improve anything, Terry says 'No need, we really like it how it is,' whilst Charlie adds, 'Plus we need to get on and add a counter-melody idea - that will really make it really crazy!' Their confidence is most striking despite being somewhat misguided.

**10.25:** As I move around the room I notice that girls are far more likely to be complying with the HoD's instructions and constantly refer to his prompt sheet (which reminds them of the basic requirements of the tasks and gives ideas for extension work). I interrupt a pair of girls in order to hear their composition and ask them what they think of this task. The girls say they enjoy this sort of activity and then rather reluctantly show me their work. It appears well thought out and clearly meets the majority of criteria. Nevertheless they are embarrassed and unnecessarily negative about it. Kara says, 'It's complete rubbish,' so I ask

why. They pull faces and Mia says, ‘It hasn’t got a proper swing rhythm going yet’. I remind them of how to quantise the hi-hat part and they begin to put this into action. I find it interesting that although the girls express a liking for composing they denigrate their work, quite unnecessarily.

These girls’ behaviours and reactions further demonstrate the personal relationships that they tend to have with their compositions (Green, 1997, Armstrong, 2008, 2011); criticisms were heartfelt and negative perceptions concerning the less successful aspects of their work were adversely affecting their overall engagement.

### *7.23 Pupils on Composing*

Unlike evidence gleaned during observations, there did not appear to be much difference between girls’ and boys’ views about composing in interviews. This was particularly true at KS3 since the majority (students from Suburban Street where more composition was seen to be undertaken) expressed high levels of enjoyment, especially concerning the activity’s ability to promote musical experimentation:

**John (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I prefer this because there’s no right or wrong like when you’re playing keyboards.

**Leroy (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... I wouldn’t mind doing that all the time...

**Wayne (Seaside Town/Yr8):** Doing my own tunes on computer... I’m addicted.

**James (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Sometimes I can actually make something decent... by accident usually.

**Gemma (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I like composing better... because when we get to make up our own tunes... well even if it’s in a group it’s easier because if one person doesn’t get it we can still all do it...

**Mercy (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I like composing ‘cos I don’t have to listen to anyone else...

**Carina (Suburban Street/Yr7):** We like doing this... there's lots of freedom...

**Laura (Suburban Street/Yr7):** There are no rules like when you have to play from notation.

Most KS4 statements were also positive as the following selection reveal:

**Gareth (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I like composing... I'm probably better at playing but I can compose... I can use the technology that's needed for that.

**Warren (Rural Country/GCSE):** I quite like the composing aspect... the freedom of what you can do within the areas of study.

**Anthony (Rural Country/GCSE):** I just don't have any problems with it...

**Vanessa (Rural Country/GCSE):** I like the composing part, where you get to do new things that are creative...

Nevertheless, four KS4 girls revealed varying degrees of insecurity about their abilities:

**Stephanie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** Well, I think that it's OK. I struggled a bit at first with everything but I think that I'm getting the hang of it.

**Jasmine (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I think that I really struggle... I'm always having to ask for help. Sometimes it gets really confusing, and when something's not working I think oh my god here we go again...

**Christie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I'm all right with it... but I'm not brilliant.

**Gabby (Rural Country/GCSE):** The composition... I find that quite difficult but it's easier using the Sibelius programme to help...

These comments potentially denote that as girls age they become increasingly aware of many boys' confidence and autonomy when composing, comparing their own

work less favourably in the light of this. Close comparisons can be drawn here with Green's study where many KS4 girls retreated from presenting themselves as composers and often denigrated their work and the nature of their feelings about it (1997: 228-9). In contrast the only boy to express dissatisfaction with his skills in this study, criticised these in relation to his own expectations rather than those of others.

**Max (Rural Country/GCSE):** I'm too self-critical when it comes to composing and prefer working out arrangements of other people's music in my own way...

As in the earlier study, four boys (but notably no girls) who were taking GCSE, expressed such high levels of confidence that they desired complete autonomy:

**Murray (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I like composing but I hate the restrictions they put on it like having to do minimalism... I guess that I'd prefer to do free composition... other people in the class aren't so experienced in the theory side of things so they might find it more difficult to be a freelance composer... possibly they need more guidelines... I don't want to have to incorporate set things into it... I want to put into it what I think it needs...

**Richard (Rural Country/GCSE):** I really like the way that sometimes you can just go off and compose something for a group... 'cos that's the sort of way I work out of school and I love improvising and just writing songs... if people like the final product then that gives me a real high.

Apart from this last remark it was noticeable that boys mostly talked about their work in a distant and unemotional way (as did boys in L. Green's 1993 study); composing was a rational product of the head rather than heart and emotions were rarely attached to it (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Koza, 1994).

BTEC pupils in Suburban Street were equally positive about this discipline but most discussed composing in a more abstract way without actually referring to it by name or identifying it as a separate from performing.

**Lee (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I like making up a DJ sound board... your own track in your own style.

Meanwhile girls in the BTEC group, although proportionally smaller in number, did not reveal the same levels of stress about composing as their GCSE counterparts:

**Jenna (Suburban Street/BTEC):** Yeah... everyone does their own type of things individually... everyone's work has a different sound to it... different instruments and styles...

**Robyn (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I like making songs on the computer... there's nothing about it that I don't like actually.

**Alisha (Suburban Street/BTEC):** BTEC seemed more fun 'cos you get to make up more of your own stuff... it's more exciting than just practising whatever it is you're playing...

Most students from Seaside Town had nothing to say about composing indicating its lack of relevance to their performance-orientated BTEC. Nevertheless three boys still mentioned their liking for it including one who clearly had a private, identity as a composer, unexploited in the school environment:

**Joseph (Seaside Town/BTEC):** Sometimes I'll try to copy other people's stuff at home... but I do like to invent something of my own too... I've always been more composition orientated.

### **7.3 Gender and the Use of Technology**

Although technology is used in schools for performance purposes it appears to assume its greatest importance in the act of composition where it enables pupils to create and hear music that they could not necessarily play. For the purposes of this section, technology is presumed to concern computer hardware, software and the surrounding recording paraphernalia; it does not cover playing the electronic keyboard since it functions as a traditional instrument (views on this feature in Chapter 6).

Over the past 20 years a technological revolution has taken place in many, if not all, secondary music departments (see **Appendix B** for the resources pertaining to all schools in this survey). Although Green noted that it had the ability to fulfil many of the

requirements necessary for boys' achievement in the music classroom, technology's reduced appeal to girls was also very apparent in her study (1997: 175-6). Early research by Comber et. al. (1993) concerning its employment in the secondary music classroom concurred with this view, indicating that computers had a masculine image. Girls frequently described themselves as anxious about using them whilst appearing happier when handling electronic keyboards with their close affinities to 'real' musical instruments. In contrast, 'boys were enthusiastic and often casual about how easy it (technology) was to operate; for many it represented a considerable short-cut to writing and performing' (1993: 130).

Reasons for girls' lack of confidence in all things mechanical and technological have frequently been explained by their decreased likelihood of having received socialisation in such matters in the outside world (Caputo, 1994, Bayton, 1988, 1998). This also results in many using technology as a tool to help produce music rather than as a means to an end (Colley et al., 1997). Indeed Caputo states that technology is so steeped in masculinised norms that it cannot help but alienate girls who have traditionally been socialised to pursue, 'relational, analogic ways of knowing' (1994: 89) that have little relevance in the technological world.

Nonetheless, initial concerns about gender inequity in the 1990s were somewhat eclipsed during the widespread technological expansion that occurred after the turn of the new century, especially in terms of the greater availability of home computers and the advantages that these might provide all pupils. The 'Young People and Music Participation' project (O'Neill et al., 2001) confirmed that equal numbers of boys and girls were using computers to make music in Years 6 and 7, either at home or school. The motivating and democratising attributes of computers were now championed in much research, suggesting that with sufficient access to the appropriate hardware and software, *all* students could benefit from their usage<sup>40</sup>. Other studies stated that although both sexes expressed interest in using all aspects of music technology, boys considered themselves better at using the software (Wright, 2001) whilst many more of them attended music technology clubs in school (Cooper, 2010), both regularly and casually.

It also appears that girls during this era continued to express more worries about personal efficacy, especially when having to work in the public arena of the classroom, despite little evidence of poorer levels of competency (Valentine & Holloway, 2001, Cooper & Weaver, 2003). In particular, fears surrounding issues of performance, control

<sup>40</sup> See amongst others: Mills & Murray (2000), Savage & Challis (2001), Pitts & Kwami (2002), Ho (2004a, 2004b, 2007), Savage (2008) and Vakeva (2009).

and self-identity, alongside the low expectations that emanated from these phobias, resulted in two common outcomes; an initial reluctance to use technology in front of others and an apparent under-performance when doing so. Meanwhile, despite the gender gap having narrowed in many areas of common technological usage, it was deemed to be widest in musical applications (Colley & Comber, 2003a).

Alternative research from this period rejects these notions however, suggesting that girls were neither intimidated by technology, nor believed themselves to lack capability. Ho's study (2004a) of children across primary and secondary stages in Hong Kong revealed little gender disparity regarding enthusiasm and self-confidence but some differences in how the sexes preferred to employ music technology; girls were most likely to use it for performing and listening purposes and boys for composing and musical literacy. Cooper's research into gender inclusiveness in her own music technology classroom (2010) found similar levels of confidence displayed by both sexes but lower levels of enthusiasm from girls, who, she concluded, were simply less interested in using it. Another study by Sanders (2006) similarly found that girls' enthusiasm for technology declined more rapidly than boys' as they matured.

Further investigations into pupils' use of music technology have confirmed that equal entitlement across social groupings does not necessarily transfer into equity of usage or outcomes since (like other commodities) it cannot exist free from cultural influences and impediments. Armstrong describes the prevailing deterministic discourses surrounding technology as 'alarmingly regressive' (2008: 376) since they deny the socially constructed nature of computers and the ways in which they are used. Her study of music technology usage in four, co-educational, London secondary schools suggests that despite young peoples' equal home ownership of computers, a gender gap remains in that, 'both the continuing *material* and *symbolic* associations of technology with men and masculinity contribute to the perception of women as less able and less interested in all things technological' (2011: 3).

Armstrong argues that the dominant pedagogy in classrooms is that of the 'doodling/have a go/press and find out' type which favours boys who tend to use these strategies at home for gaming and surfing. However girls, who utilise text-based practices more frequently, express a dislike of trial-and-error learning, preferring more structured and incremental methods. Indeed, Armstrong only experienced a handful of girls who felt comfortable with the 'have-a-go and see' approach and most importantly they came from schools in which there was 'less emphasis on exhibiting and



constructing an overt technological identity' (2011: 47).

In her questionnaire Armstrong also noted that when asked, 'Do you feel confident using music technology in your composing?' only 48% of females responded positively as opposed to 90% of males. Girls' statements emphasised the unpredictability of technology, including fear of losing work alongside worries about inadequacy engendered by a lack of proper and sequential instruction in the use of the software. In contrast boys played down these issues, refuting the possibility that computer usage was problematic.

Cooper's classroom research (2010) likewise found that Year 9 boys were far more likely to be confident about using it; indeed 70% of male participants said the programme Dance e-Jay was easy to use, as opposed to only 31% of females. In contrast, Mellor's study into the use of this programme as a compositional aid (2008) suggested that its motivating effects, especially in terms of immediacy and professional sound quality, were particularly evident amongst two groups of pupils; low-achievers and most notably for this study, girls.

Armstrong (2011) also noted that those areas dedicated for technology often further inhibited female participation. She found that girls visited the rooms containing computers far less than boys, typically preferring to jot down ideas using conventional notation at pianos and transferring ideas to computers afterwards. Conversely, boys mostly hogged technological spaces, even physically barring the entrance to facilities regardless of available room, and implying that such areas were exclusively male.

Meanwhile a dominant technological discourse existed between some male teachers and their students which clearly favoured boys' knowledge and needs (thus positioning girls outside of it) whilst also limiting opportunities for girls to display their knowledge and expertise (2011: 47). Since teacher-identity plays a central part in dictating curriculum choices and the pedagogies via which they are transmitted, Armstrong suggests that this is an example of some, either knowingly or unintentionally, partaking in institutionalised gendering with respect to the hierarchical organisation of subject knowledge.

Inevitably, this leads to the question of whether single-sexed classes may be more beneficial in this particular area of musical learning. Despite no specific research in music, studies into secondary school students' attitudes towards technology in general suggest that girls in mixed learning environments are less happy about engaging with computers than those in solely female arenas (Sanders, 2006, Logan, 2007).

However, whether this anomaly is affected by factors other than gender, such as differences in the dominant social class of girls that attend single-sex schools, is a pertinent consideration here. Finally, it should be noted that current recommendations for music education to embed the latest mobile and digital technologies into all music classrooms (Henley, 2011, Zeserson et al., 2014) have the potential to exacerbate the gender divide in this area still further.

#### **7.4 Use of Technology in this Study**

Twenty teachers and 45 pupils chose to comment. Of the 28 KS4 statements, 19 were from technologically well-resourced Suburban Street, with all but three emanating from the BTEC students and indicating its heightened importance and relevance to them. Only five KS4 comments came from girls and these were not unanimously positive like those from boys. A comparatively small number (17) of KS3 pupils contributed, (10 boys and seven girls) but notably not one came from Rural Country where computer usage was very restricted at this key stage<sup>41</sup>.

##### *7.41 Teachers on the Use of Technology*

Most respondents indicated that they did not not perceive technology as a particularly problematic area in terms of its relationship to gender. Of the four statements indicating that all students were equally aided through its employment, only one suggested that girls and boys used it differently, despite achieving equally successful outcomes:

***School 60:*** With the introduction of ICT both can access Cubase etc. in order to compose equally well.

***School 40:*** Outcomes are the same although boys tend to use just music IT whereas girls are flexible and use a combination of techniques and resources.

***School 69:*** The increase in use of music technology has been a way of engaging more boys in classroom music... but girls equally enjoy these activities.

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<sup>41</sup> For information about teachers and pupils views on technology in the earlier study see Green (1997, pp. 175-6).

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** I don't think that technology dissuades girls because they are into it just as much. I've never met any girls who were scared of the technology... boys were definitely the more technological in the past... well I don't know if this is true these days...

However eight statements suggested that boys' usage was greater and consequently might lead to them achieving superior compositional outcomes, especially at KS4:

**School 6:** Boys tend to be more interested and adept at manipulating the technology within the composing process.

**School 12:** However at GCSE boys tend to outperform the girls (at composing) perhaps because they are more inclined to use technology like Cubase.

**School 33:** Boys are better at composing as they like playing on computers!

**Mr. Brewer (Rural Country):** I think at GCSE many of the guitar-based kids prefer to focus on it... but it is generally lads, who come to it... they mostly speak the language of guitar-playing and can do more technological wizardry... and they're quite creative with the ways they use mixing desks and things.

Meanwhile just two respondents argued that girls' confidence was poor in this area:

**School 6:** Despite a levelling out in most areas, girls need strategies to aid their issues with technology....

**School 39:** With more technology engaging more boys there still seems to be a gap to fill in terms of how to engage under-confident girls...

#### *7.42 Use of Technology in the Focus Schools*

Many of the issues surrounding technology and gender that have arisen from recent research (see section 7.3) were being played out in the classrooms of these departments. At Suburban Street, work across both key stages was very technologically driven,

apparently creating a positive response from all pupils. However in field observations, and very much in accordance with the gendered variations noted by Green (1997) and Armstrong (2008, 2011), boys were clearly more confident and autonomous:

***Diary extract: Suburban Street Year 9 observation***

An intense period of work begins with all pupils using headphones. There is some giggling as pairs invent ideas and record or reject them. It is noticeable that many girls' hands are raised in order to ask for technical help; this usually involves the issue of quantising. I assist the HoD in troubleshooting and notice that very few boys appear to be asking for assistance; indeed I only answer questions from girls. I am not sure whether this is because boys are working out how to solve the problems by themselves or they don't want to be seen to require help or even that they haven't noticed timing concerns in their pieces. The boys definitely exude more confidence in handling the software but whether this is apparent or actual is not immediately evident.

In Rural Country, a department with relatively poor facilities, there was limited pupil experience of technology at KS3. Indeed the few computers in the main teaching room appeared solely reserved for the very musically able in Year 9 (who were viewed as potential GCSE candidates). Boys in particular seemed very unhappy about this:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

I chat to a group of boys what sorts of things they would like to do in music if they had the choice, and they all agree rather dejectedly that working on computers would be fun but that, 'No-one ever gets to do that in Year 7'.

However far more technological input was incorporated into composition at KS4 where smaller group numbers allowed for this. The female assistant, who had studied for a Bachelor of Science honours degree in music and had much experience of and interest in technology, came to prominence here since the male HoD had very limited knowledge in comparison. (Whether her agency might have drastically diminished if a technologically-orientated male teacher was also working in the department is a matter of consideration here.) Her influence upon boys' up-take was momentous at both GCSE (see section 11.223) but equally regarding the newly established 'A' level Music

Technology where all but one member of the current group were boys and the prospective group for the next year was entirely male.

Reasons for this situation appeared complex. The respondent mentioned that many of the boys currently taking GCSE had been in her form throughout secondary school and that she had worked hard to make relationships in order to encourage them into musical engagement (she made no reference to making the same effort with girls):

***Ms Flatley (Rural Country):*** I've made it quite an important thing to communicate with the boys... you know to try and talk to the boys about football and I've been to see them play rugby matches... so they don't think... she's a woman so she wouldn't be interested in what we're doing... it is important because then they have that little bit more respect for you... because you're showing interest in something that they're interested in... that's what I try to do with music as well... show an interest in their music... that I know what's going on and that we can incorporate that into the classroom...

Despite the availability of suitable hardware resources (if not software) at Seaside Town, it was notable that the KS3 teacher Mrs Asaaf, who possessed sound knowledge, was confined to delivering a traditional, instrument-based curriculum. In contrast, technology was used far more at KS4 and especially at KS5 where a man with a former career in recording was employed to teach the higher BTEC levels and whose classes were entirely male. Although KS5 is not part of this remit, it is important to recognise the profound message that younger pupils were receiving in both of these schools; that technology is complex and exists as part of an almost exclusively male culture of intellectual expertise, operating at the highest reaches of musical learning.

#### *7.43 Boys and Girls and the Use of Technology*

At Suburban Street, where the department was extremely well-equipped and computer usage thoroughly embedded in the curriculum, views were diverse with some students being greatly in favour of utilising them but others suggesting that they were overused:

**Kara (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I like the idea of being able to correct mistakes.

**Mia (Suburban Street/Yr9):** It's not like performing on an instrument when you muck it up and then it's spoilt.

**Amy (Suburban Street/Yr9):** It's always doing the same things on Cubase... we need more variety... we should do more stuff than just computers and keyboards and the teachers talking...

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... 'cos we use the computers and keyboard a lot... but we should have a bit more variety...

**Jake (Suburban Street/Yr7):** He (*the teacher*) says 'go on Cubase' and he'll say 'pick an instrument' and we'll just press any button... we're not really learning anything proper...

The BTEC pupils at Suburban Street were very positive about computer usage, especially in terms of their ability to accurately play back what they had composed. The following remarks are representative of the range of views expressed:

**Jodie (Suburban Street/BTEC):** We don't have to play our compositions...

**Greg (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I think that it's more fun on the computers... I felt better at that... if you do something wrong you can just do it again... but when you play an instrument... you can muck up the whole thing...

**Robyn (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I prefer doing things on the computer... the performing bit of GCSE scared me...

Nevertheless a few boys indicated a dislike of some of the available software, in particular Sibelius, which they felt was too notation based for their needs:

***Suburban Street BTEC boys' discussion***

**Lee:** I learnt keyboard across the years in school... and got into using computers and music programmes here... I use Cubase... sometimes Sibelius... but I don't really understand that so well.

**Nabib:** I got introduced to keyboards here in school. I like using Cubase because you can do different types of music... not sure about Sibelius though...

**Lee:** Yeah, sometimes we have to use Sibelius which is hard... I prefer using Cubase on the computers in here 'cos you can do all sorts of stuff yourself and it's free and easy...

Since technology hardly featured at KS3 in Rural Country, pupils failure to discuss it in interviews was perhaps unsurprising however it also rarely featured in KS4 discussions where it was utilised for GCSE composition. Conversely its lack of use at KS3 in Seaside Town (where departmental resources were far more up-to-date) resulted in many younger students complaining about the situation and expressing a genuine desire to use computers for music-making:

***Seaside Town Year 7 girls' discussion***

**AG:** Do you use the computers at all in Year 7?

**Diana:** Only if Miss is not here and for doing written work.

**AG:** But for making music I mean.

*(Chorus of 'No' from everyone.)*

**Chanel:** I really want to use Audacity *(a music programme)*...

***Seaside Town Year 7 boys' discussion***

**AG:** What about using computers in making music?

**Ashley:** Ooh yeah... that'd be good... 'cos we can't do music on them at the mo(ment).

**Bruce:** ... and I'd really like to use the computers a bit more as well...

***Seaside Town Year 8 boys' discussion***

**Samuel:** I wouldn't mind going on computers to do things...

**Wayne:** I like keyboards and computers... If we've finished what we should have done then we should have free time on computers to explore music...

Although those taking the KS4 performance-based BTEC at Seaside Town had nothing to say about the use of computers (since these were only used in the production of text-based work rather than music-making) two diary entries made when observing

about the students engaging with recording technology are extremely revealing regarding gendered prejudices amongst the participants:

***Diary extract: Seaside Town BTEC observation***

The teacher comments that there were some sound issues in the performance since at one point a microphone cut out. Several boys immediately identify the girls as having being at fault and one accuses them of having accidentally turned it off. The teacher quickly dismisses this unfair accusation and makes it clear that it was the fault of the sound desk. Indeed he praises Beneasha for her quick thinking in that she reorganised other microphones in order to compensate for the problem, whilst continuing to perform. The boys have not only failed to notice this but are equally unwilling to give any praise for her actions upon discovering the truth!

***Diary extract: Seaside Town BTEC observation***

The girls are also reticent in terms of projecting their voices into the microphones – they have to be constantly reminded to get closer and sing out. This behaviour is in contrast to any males involved in the recording; the bass player and teacher-guitarist exude a quiet air of total confidence, competence and ease around the recording paraphernalia. Meanwhile the recording technician works very professionally around the performers despite secretly pulling exasperated expressions (about the girls) towards his male friends who are watching the proceedings.

These examples strongly resonate with many findings by Green (1997) and Armstrong (2008, 2011) in that they further the notion that many boys radiate confidence in this environment, frequently assuming a superior attitude when working alongside girls whilst often being dismissive of their attempts to succeed in its use. In contrast most girls appear tentative and even a little scared around technology; as a result they tend to defer to boys' apparent greater knowledge and practical experiences without questioning why this situation exists or attempting to reclaim some of this territory for themselves. Despite this, only two girls, both taking GCSE, openly expressed concerns about their abilities when utilising the hardware and related software programmes:



**Samantha (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I don't always like doing stuff on Cubase... because I don't always understand... I don't really do like the computer side.

**Florence (Rural Country/GCSE):** I was and still am worried about all the computer stuff... but I've learnt a lot and it's getting better now...

## 7.5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has examined the history of composing and the use of technology in relation to gender and school music with specific reference to issues emerging from the data in this study. Important outcomes concerning composition include that:

- There was much agreement between outcomes from the two studies (1993/2009-11) in that the majority of teachers believe that girls and boys achieved equally.
- Despite this, there was also a high level of consensus amongst current teachers (as in Green's 1993 study) that the methods employed by either sex were often radically different. They suggested that girls mostly preferred to use real instruments (especially keyboards) whilst boys tended to opt for working with either computers or rock instruments. Pupils' comments also endorsed these beliefs about gendered preferences.
- Although the majority of teachers agreeing that pupils achieved equally successful outcomes, slippage in their perceptions was common. Indeed many defined their students in the light of historically established discourses, particularly those that align the male with superior creative abilities. Since nationally published data suggests that girls achieve higher average grade outcomes at both GCSE and BTEC (see section 1.11) the accuracy of these beliefs is spurious, however they continue to dominate thinking regarding this discipline.
- As in the earlier study, and in line with the traditional notion of the male as possessing superior compositional abilities ((McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, 1994, Green, 1997) many respondents described boys as more creative, innovative and logical in composition as they matured, resulting in their production of superior compositions at KS4. Conversely, girls were praised for their co-operation and

diligence at KS3 but were viewed as dull and over-conformist at examination level (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). Even those teachers who viewed girls as better at composition mostly identified their ability to structure work and obey rules as being key to their success, as opposed to the possession of innate talent.

- Prevailing perceptions amongst the respondents in this study also suggested that the popularity for using technology in composition increased amongst boys across KS3 but hardly at all amongst girls. Notably this increase ran parallel with the perception of boys' improving standards in composition.
- KS3 pupils described themselves as equally keen on composing despite limited evidence of its usage in two of the three focus schools. However at Suburban Street where KS3 composition was frequently observed, and in accordance with Green's findings (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), boys were seen to be more autonomous, confident and rule-breaking than girls (who were more likely to denigrate their work and ask for teacher approval).
- At KS4 some females, unlike any males, expressed insecurities about their skills whilst several boys, but no girls, exhibited extremely high levels of confidence.
- Just two teachers appeared aware of this situation, suggesting that it was important for female teachers to lead composition, especially as role models for girls; however they failed to consider the parallel impact technology as part of the composition process and how its strongly masculine delineations might further complicate issues. Indeed most teacher respondents in this study demonstrated little or no awareness of the disadvantages that many girls experience in this discipline, especially the negative effect that a lack of any female heritage can have upon their confidence and determination.

Important outcomes re the use of technology include that:

- Only a small number of teachers commented in this area, potentially indicating that they do not believe it to be particularly problematic. Indeed none of those interviewed in the focus schools, suggested that technology-based pedagogies favoured boys over girls although one noted that they tended to use different software (with girls preferring to use notation-orientated programmes e.g. Sibelius rather than sequence-based ones e.g. Cubase).
- Several respondents also remarked upon differences in boys' and girls' behaviours when using technology, suggesting that girls were mostly reticent

and lacking in confidence whereas boys were more likely to embrace its inclusion with enthusiasm and assurance (Caputo, 1994, Valentine & Holloway, 2001, Cooper & Weaver, 2003, Armstrong, 2008, 2011, Cooper, 2010).

- KS3 pupils appeared equally keen to use technology in music lessons despite many having had very limited, if any, experience. At KS4, where technology was used more extensively, only girls expressed insecurities.
- In KS4 observations boys seemed confident and capable in using other technological paraphernalia such as recording equipment, but were often dismissive of female attempts to engage (Caputo, 1994, Bayton, 1988, 1998, Armstrong, 2008, 2011). Girls were seen to be awkward and tentative in this arena mostly deferring to boys' presumed superior knowledge.
- It also appeared that technology's masculine delineations permitted males to both dominate the spaces and the discourses associated with it, within the focus music departments (Armstrong, 2008, 2011). Meanwhile girls predominantly remained passive on-lookers or reticent participants, continually failing to challenge established precedents concerning males' superior competency in this area.
- Although KS3 girls did not openly express their insecurities about technology in interviews (perhaps for fear of being viewed as inept) gendered outcomes of KS4 courses in the focus schools revealed that far fewer were opting for those that were dominated by technology (see Chapter 11 for more detail). This suggests that many girls perceive themselves as lacking the required confidence and know-how to opt for such courses at the close of KS3.
- Similarly if the discourses and practices surrounding technology are steeped in 'maleness' (Armstrong, 2008, 2011) then this situation cannot help but put many girls off studying it; indeed it seems hardly coincidental that the strongest department in terms of technology was the all-male staffed Suburban Street in which many more boys were pursuing KS4 music, particularly the technologically-orientated BTEC.
- It should also be noted that although the sex of a teacher has not been identified as being an essential consideration in most musical disciplines, it is hypothesised that it may play some part in affecting pupils' interaction, confidence and examination choices in this area. If, as Armstrong (2008, 2011) suggests, women fail to be accorded any status in the use of technology, then they will continue to

be perceived as lacking the required know-how to impart the necessary knowledge, regardless of the actual technical expertise that they possess. Although the abilities of the female assistant in Rural County were valued by students, this appeared to be a result of her profile being in direct opposition to the very feminine-gendered nature of departmental curriculum and pedagogy as established by the a male HoD who had limited technological know-how. I suggest that she would have been viewed as less of a natural arbiter of learning in the masculine-gendered arena of a highly technologically-orientated department, imbued in the discourses of male 'techno-speak' (Armstrong, 2011: 69), such as Suburban Street.

## **Chapter 8: Listening, Appraising, Notation and Gender**

This chapter divides into two sections; the first explores respondents' thoughts about listening and appraising and the second examines the use of notation in the classroom environment. Both are reviewed in relation to Green's 1993 findings in order to highlight the similarities and differences emerging from data comparison.

### **8.1 Gendered Traditions in Listening and Appraising**

Until the introduction of GCSE Music (1985) listening and appraising activities were loosely included in the umbrella term, 'musical appreciation'. This activity was established as an important element of musical learning in the 1944 education act (Cox, 1993) and usually involved listening to major works from the classical canon, whilst learning factual information about compositions and composers (alongside score reading for the notationally competent)<sup>42</sup>. With the advent of the National Curriculum for Music (1992) and its subsequent revisions (DfE, 1995, DfEE/QCA, 1999, QCA, 2007, DfE, 2009, 2011), listening and appraising has widened its embrace to include popular and world genres whilst advocating that it should not be experienced as an isolated, stand-alone activity, but inform and enlighten related aspects of classroom practical work. Indeed research outcomes concerning the Musical Futures programme indicate that students believed that engaging in critical listening was a vital tool in the advancement of their acquisition of performance skills (Hallam et al., 2011: 21).

Unlike other areas of the curriculum, the relationship between gender and listening and appraising, has been little explored. However Green noted that teachers were more likely to suggest that girls achieved greater success due to their superior focus and patience when participating (1997: 173).

### **8.2 Listening and Appraising in this Study**

Fewer contributions were made by respondents in the current survey about this activity (only 56) but they also revealed high levels of consensus concerning boys' and girls' attributes and behaviours that resonated with those comments made in L. Green's study

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<sup>42</sup> For a more detailed examination of the historical development of the music curriculum see Cox (1993, 2002), Pitts (2000) and Rainbow (with Cox) (2006).

(1993). In comparison, an exceptionally small number of students contributed (28), suggesting that this was not an area of great concern. Of the 14 statements from KS3, 10 were from girls, possibly indicating its greater importance to, or impact upon, them. All but three of these also came from Year 7, potentially suggesting that the activity was less embedded and more likely to be regarded in isolation in the early stages of KS3 music. Not one BTEC respondent commented (once again indicating the more holistic nature of the course) whereas 14 GCSE students remarked upon it; hardly surprising since a separate listening and writing examination exists as part of all GCSE syllabi<sup>43</sup>.

### 8.21 Teachers on Listening and Appraising

It should be recalled that more than two-thirds of respondents indicated that there were no difference between girls' and boys' success in listening and appraising although this number had slightly declined since the 1993 survey (see section 4.2). Those considering boys as more successful had improved from zero to three, whilst numbers believing girls to be likewise had almost doubled. Further data procured from teachers in the present study indicated that although most believed listening and appraising to be predominantly popular with all pupils, a substantial minority argued that girls' preference for this activity had slightly decreased by Year 9. Conversely, a small minority believed that boys' preferences had improved across this same period.

<b>Listen/Appraising</b>	Yr 7	Boys Prefer=0	Equal Preference=45	Girls Prefer=28
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<b>Listen/Appraising</b>	Yr 9	Boys Prefer=2	Equal preference=49	Girls Prefer=20
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Of the 33 statements supporting the notion that there was no difference in gendered outcomes, seven insisted that they were unobservable since boys and girls were either equally successful (or unsuccessful) at this activity:

**School 31:** Both give equally reasoned responses at both KS3 and KS4.

**School 51:** Both find this difficult compared to practical music and enjoy it less.

<sup>43</sup> For information about teachers and pupils views on listening and appraising in the earlier study see Green (1997 pp.154-157 and pp. 173-75).

**School 58:** There is no difference based on assessment outcomes and my personal observations.

Six respondents also said that factors apart from gender were more likely to predict success, from the quality of the teaching to the pupils' personal skills and interests:

**School 4:** ... it depends on the choice of piece and its presentation.

**School 46:** ... it depends on the given activity and the motivation of the individual student.

**School 71:** This is more about individual musical knowledge and understanding.

Of the 20 respondents who believed outcomes to be similar but gendered behaviours very different, all but one agreed that girls were more focused on the tasks and willing to write down answers whereas boys were more likely to be involved in whole-class discussion:

**School 17:** There are no significant differences... although girls are often better at appraising music in writing this is often due to poorer literacy and effort levels in boys rather than ability.

**School 25:** Girls often listen in a more focused way but boys express themselves better verbally.

**School 37:** It seems that their listening skills are more advanced although it may be that they can articulate their thoughts about what they hear better than boys.

**School 64:** I think that boys and girls listen for different things when they hear music. Often the boys seek out the meaning of the music or lyrics whereas girls will pick out the multiple elements in operation.

Boys' weaker (non-musical) literacy skills across all age ranges (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et al., 2005) are clearly an issue for many teachers, especially in

terms of their frequent inability to give appropriate written responses. This matter may also help to explain why girls are more successful at GCSE, since around one third of the marks are awarded for written answers relating to listening extracts.

In common with other musical disciplines however, three respondents identified changes occurring across time, arguing that boys out-performed girls after KS4 options:

**School 17:** Lower down the school I would say girls are best, but further up boys seem to produce more thoughtful answers.

**School 62:** I find that the best written responses at KS4 come from the able male pupils who use technical vocabulary.

**School 76:** In Years 7 and 8 the response is equal however in Year 9 it is girls that excel. At higher levels (KS4 onwards) girls tend to listen more closely but boys have more relevant opinions when appraising.

Once again these comments bolster the notion of the existence of a group of high achieving boys (Green: 1997: 227); this occurs despite the respondents supplying no data to back this supposition and there being no corroborative evidence from KS4 national outcomes either (see section 1.11).

The 18 statements supporting girls' greater accomplishment in listening and appraising tended to refer to their likelihood of possessing superior levels of both general and musical literacy, coupled with a willingness to apply themselves (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et al., 2005, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007):

**School 36:** Girls put down more comprehensive answers and use key terms...

**School 63:** The girls tend to be more analytical since many more of them are classically trained.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls generally listen and make more connections – boys hear but they don't really listen. They don't cross link skills either e.g. if they've learnt to play a walking bass line one week - they don't recognise it when played in a recorded example a week later - a lot of girls do however!



Others perceived girls as possessing certain qualities, be they innate or learned, that engendered success:

**School 10:** Girls appear to be able to retain the information more easily...

**School 32:** Girls tend to give more attention to detail and therefore have better attention spans. Boys need more one-to-one assistance to become as proficient.

**School 40:** Boys find it difficult to concentrate for a long enough time. They also tend to generalise whilst appraising and seem unable to remember appropriate vocabulary.

**School 60:** Girls seem to be more able to remember and recognise musical sounds when doing these tasks.

Some also credited girls with the ability to be more openly receptive whereas boys were more likely to switch off if music lacked appeal:

**School 10:** In the classroom boys prefer to listen to popular music. Girls tend to be more tolerant of a wide variety of musical sources.

**School 29:** Girls relate to classical and film music more...

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls will listen to anything if they think that there is a purpose to it, even if they don't like it – they expect that there is a reason for experiencing it and therefore will cope with classical music in this respect. With my boys if it's not RnB, hip-hop, rap, MC-ing they can't relate.

**School 77:** Girls seem more open minded to other types/styles of music whereas boys are very fixated on a particular style and will often try to reject everything else without actually listening to it properly.

Outcomes from the investigation into the success of the Musical Futures programme indicates that 93% of interviewed teachers believed that its pedagogical

methods assisted students in developing good listening skills (Hallam et al., 2011: 9). This suggests that the integration of appropriate listening and appraising, according to students' personal choices, may particularly benefit boys, who seem less willing to engage with this activity unless it relates to their personal musical interests. However of the four statements supporting boys' superiority in listening and appraising, two said that it was a product of their wider engagement with music outside of the classroom:

***School 27:*** ... boys are used to listening more carefully when working in groups/bands.

***School 28:*** They tend to listen to music more generally than most girls.

#### *8.22 Listening and Appraising in the Focus Schools*

Classroom observations provided little evidence about listening activities as examples were few and far between when compared to performing. However a listening feedback exercise at the start of a Year 7 lesson was indicative of the diversity of language used by boys and girls when responding to music and supports several survey respondents' suppositions that girls recall and use subject-specific vocabulary more successfully.

##### ***Diary extract: Seaside Town Year 7 observation***

The pupils are encouraged to contribute 'mood' words to describe the music (Mars from the Planets Suite). Lots of boys' hands shoot up but most volunteer nouns such as war, Star Trek, Star Wars, Indiana Jones. Just three provide suitable adjectives such as dangerous, adventurous, violent and maniacal. Although only three girls offer their thoughts they proffer rather different vocabulary using scary, triumphant and frightening. However, when the HoD asks who knows the musical word meaning 'loud', nine girls' hands shoot up compared with just two boys'. The HoD deliberately picks a boy who knows that 'f' represents loud and that another letter represents soft although he cannot remember which. When a girl is chosen from a sea of female hands, she expands the answer into the Italian terms of 'forte' and 'piano'.

In this example, the boys appeared happy to use personal vocabulary with which they

were comfortable, particularly that relating to popular film imagery, however their confidence waned when technical terms were required. In contrast the girls were less interested in contributing general adjectives (whilst their choices also tended to be less aggressive than the boys') but revealed greater confidence and accuracy in the use of technical musical terms, behaviours similarly noted by many survey respondents.

### *8.23 Pupils on Listening and Appraising*

Despite many teachers having identified girls as more successful in listening tasks at KS3 they were only marginally more positive than boys, with the majority expressing dislike for the activity:

#### ***Suburban Street Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Kerry:** The thing I don't like is listening activities....

**Amy:** I think they're all right... (*Chorus of 'Oh no they're not,' from others.*)

**David (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I don't like listening... it's a bit boring...

**Sam (Rural Country/Yr7):** I quite like it because we don't really do anything.

**Anna (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I don't mind it when we listen to music and we have to pick stuff out of it... that's all right...

**Chloe (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I like listening to music and then going away and trying to play that music...

Only one pupil remarked upon attitudes of the opposite sex:

**Stella (Seaside Town/Yr8):** ... boys don't like listening... they're always banging on something throughout...

At GCSE, where listening activities are clearly demarcated by examination requirements, girls' statements ranged from quite positive through to very negative:

**Stephanie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I think the listening helps... 'cos you get to understand more about different types of music and this can help the pieces that you're composing...

**Roseanne (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I'm not mad on listening... it's all right but you have to pay a lot of attention...

**Gabby (Rural Country/GCSE):** Listening to all the different genres of music... it can get a bit tedious... but it depends what you're listening to really - if it's classical, not everyone's doing their best...

**Vanessa (Rural Country/GCSE):** ... the questions are too hard and some of the music is too.

KS4 boys' comments were at best neutral but predominantly negative in that many found it both difficult and uninteresting:

**Gareth (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I don't like the listening... I hate aural tests in practical exams too...

**George (Rural Country/GCSE):** ... being sat down and listening and answering questions... it doesn't appeal to me as much as the other things.

**Anthony (Rural Country/GCSE):** ... a few months ago we had to do a practice listening questions for a mock exam and I found it really demoralising... I didn't perform very well in it.

An informal conversation at Suburban Street with Mr. Benotti shed some light upon reasons for the small numbers of boys in his GCSE groups, with poor listening skills being a prime determinant that they should not take it:

***Suburban Street: Mr Benotti***

I am very firm with parents at KS4 option evenings as to which course their child should pursue. A student who isn't going to engage with listening within

the specified areas of study at GCSE and who had more limited notational skills is far better off taking BTEC. This is more likely to be boys than girls but with the exception of those very able boys who easily cope with the demands of GCSE.

### **8.3 Gendered Traditions in the Use of Notation**

Until fairly late in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, formal musical notation was deemed to be an essential part of music education since its acquisition was perceived as vital for an individual's access to the classical canon. Even the most disinterested students were expected to acquire some basic level of understanding of the rudiments in order to partake successfully in class singing and score reading as part of a wider musical appreciation of the master-works (Cox, 1993, Vulliamy, 1977b, Green, 2002a). However since the gradual introduction of popular and world musics into the curriculum, oral-aural methods of learning have become more widely used to varying degrees. Nevertheless some HoDs still demand that all pupils engage with conventional notation regardless of the genre in which they are partaking, including popular musics (as in Rural Country).

In Green's study (1993) some evidence emerged, from teachers and pupils alike, that boys particularly favoured oral-aural methods of learning and were less willing than girls to engage in the use of formal notation. Meanwhile the current education system's greater validation of performing on instruments of rock (and the informal practices that they engender) alongside the widespread introduction of technology as a tool of composition (especially the use of sequencing software that does not rely on any formal knowledge) signifies a move away from the idea that learning traditional notation is a necessary requirement for all pupils.

Abramo's study concerning gendered group participation in the performance of original pop music (2011) notes that the students involved hardly used notation of any kind in the development of their work, but particularly standard notation (just one girl briefly used some pitches to assist in memorising an idea). Despite this, some students involved in the Musical Futures pedagogies (which do not rely upon notation learning at any level) expressed concerns about the negative effects of not being able to read music when opting for KS4 music (Hallam et al., 2011: 21).

## 8.4 Use of Notation in this Study

As in L. Green's study (1993) the teachers who contributed (66 in all) revealed a high level of consensus concerning boys' and girls' attributes and behaviours. Although not a great area of interest, students' commented more about notation than listening (40 in all), whilst the majority (34) were from KS3 (22 girls and 12 boys) and predominantly negative. The number of girls taking this position might be seen as surprising when compared to the substantial minority of teachers indicating them to be more successful in this area. However it is hypothesised that those girls who believed themselves to be capable had no need to comment whilst the majority of boys were less concerned about the need to acquire notation in order to be musically successful (and consequently did not discuss it in interview).

At KS4 only six students talked about notational issues and of these, five were girls, with all but one taking GCSE. The lack of discussion at this level is possibly explained by the fact that many KS4 pupils appeared musically literate whilst those that were not, studied BTEC which has no emphasis upon using notation<sup>44</sup>.

### 8.41 Teachers on the Use of Notation

As previously discussed, teachers' views on whether boys or girls utilised notation more successfully had not radically altered between the surveys (see section 4.2). Only two of the current 66 respondents said that formal notation had no role in their KS3 pedagogy whilst another eight suggested that it was played down, since all pupils struggled:

**School 58:** Notation is specifically not taught at KS3 due to its hierarchical nature...

**School 67:** It depends on the ability of the group but notation reading and writing is a general area of weakness and to be avoided.

In contrast a further eight specified that the acquisition of notation was essential for students to access the music curriculum and that gender was no barrier to doing well:

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<sup>44</sup> For information about teachers and pupils views on using notation in the earlier study see Green (1997, pp. 154-158).

**School 7:** It's necessary to learn but the way I teach this has no bias and boys are at liberty to do as well as girls.

**School 28:** It is something that I teach from scratch and both are encouraged/helped equally.

Nevertheless two participants noted the different ways in which boys and girls related to notation:

**School 41:** Boys like the mathematical side but girls have the concentration.

**School 44:** If taught in a specific way, boys can find it fun competitively– but girls once again show the concentration and motivation to learn something that they don't expect to be easy first off.

Seven of the respondents were adamant that playing an instrument, either currently or formerly, was the prime determinant of pupils' success:

**School 22:** It depends on the individual and the instrument that they learn.

**School 70:** Pupils that play instruments are taught formally to read and write it.

**School 71:** This is more about individual musical knowledge and understanding often gained in instrumental learning.

However, 13 others, despite having chosen the 'equally successful' option, somewhat contradicted themselves in subsequent remarks by indicating that gender was a primary indicator of achievement. Many intimated that girls were more likely to play orchestral instruments that utilised conventional notation whereas boys' preferences for playing rock instruments mostly prohibited this:

**School 51:** Girls often play traditional instruments which include the teaching of notation from an early age.

**School 54:** Boys are more likely to play guitar and drums that don't require conventional notation knowledge.

**School 64:** Girls are often drawn to instruments such as violin or flute whereas boys are more likely to play popular instruments that they can learn by ear.

**School 75:** Girls are more likely to be involved in music outside of the classroom and are thus more likely to read music – hence writing it is easier too.

Of the 34 comments supporting girls' greater achievement, several put this down to their greater levels of general effort and diligence (see section 2.3):

**School 12:** Girls seem to be more determined to actually learn to read notation.

**School 55:** Girls focus more on these tasks.

**School 62:** I find that girls are more patient when learning this; boys prefer the practical approach.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls are more successful at it – boys learn by mistake/trial and error when learning conventional pitch notation but they don't retain things as well.

**School 76:** KS3 starts off fairly equally but by Year 9 girls apply themselves far more in this aspect.

Five other teachers felt that girls and boys could read music and respond equally well but when it came to presenting sounds via written notation, girls excelled:

**School 9:** Girls generally take more pride in using notation in the presentation of their work. In terms of reading it they are fairly equal.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Boys keep it all in their heads too – what they try to play is never represented by a score (of whatever type). Boys are better orally



with rhythmic notation than girls; they can often understand and describe what is happening in terms of sub-divisions of the beat quite well. However when it comes to writing it down – girls will have a far better attempt at it and achieve much greater accuracy.

One interviewee also remarked that girls appeared far more attracted to computer packages that used formal notation, such as Sibelius.

***Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):*** You generally find that children who choose to use this tend to be female and they tend to be piano playing girls as well... in fact I can't remember the last time that I saw a boy actually choosing it... even when children that have come to the department from a neighbouring school so they've not been influenced by us... I've taught them how to use both Sibelius and Cubase and been surprised at the number of girls who have decided to write a piano piece using Sibelius.

Armstrong (2008, 2011) suggests that girls and boys construct very different meanings around particular types of software as part of their technological identities. Score-writing notational packages that present music in conventional formats and ways of knowing (e.g. Sibelius) are popular with the greater numbers of notation-orientated girls but are rejected by boys since they involve very little hands-on raw technological skill. Boys thus prefer to reaffirm and reclaim the symbolic association between technology and masculinity through becoming expert sequencers by using such programmes as Logic, Cool Edit Pro, Cubase and Reason.

#### *8.42 Use of Notation in the Focus Schools*

In terms of using formal musical notation as part of departmental pedagogy, KS3 observations in Suburban Street and Seaside Town revealed it be optional; those who wished could do so but it was possible to achieve work of the highest standards using aural skills or graphical and/or tabulated methods. Consequently students appeared far less concerned with, or worried about, notational issues in lesson observations and interviews. However the emphasis on formal notation was so dominant in Rural Country that it seemed difficult for pupils to fully access the curriculum without its

acquisition. Indeed in interview, the HoD stated that it was impossible for anyone to become a ‘true’ musician without being able to use it:

*Mr. Brewer (Rural Country):* You get instrumentalists who come into the classroom and say that they’re Grade 3 or whatever... and you ask them to play a line of crotchet and quavers and they struggle to do it... so you need to sort that out... classroom projects are aimed at helping them to do that... it’s respecting the learning that they have but re-focusing it... and for those who haven’t got that learning background to develop it... by the time our pupils have done the second project book they’ve already rubbed shoulders with triads, making tunes out of triads... you are then on the threshold of understanding 500 years of Western music... because that relationship between melodies and triads is still going on today...

By ignoring all musics in the world that are not based on the Western triad or that do not utilise any notation, Mr Brewer’s curriculum thus narrowed many pupils’ horizons; meanwhile his main educational aim appeared to be to encourage his students to view the Western classical canon as the peak of musical endeavour. The effect of this notation-centric culture certainly had gendered dimensions in Rural Country since girls in Year 7 appeared to handle it better:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

I watch two girls working at a keyboard completing a simple rondo composition task. Like many females in the room they seem well advanced and are able to move on without any teacher assistance, unlike most boys.

Nevertheless a Year 9 observation at the same school, in which groups were using a specified three-part musical scores in their performance, revealed how few pupils of either sex performed more complex music by reading the notes:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 9 observation***

All groups are working from a notated score involving a melody line, a harmony line and a bass part with chord symbols above it. Pupils are expected to read from the notation as they play. Just a handful of girls are doing this whereas

most are using a mixture of informal techniques to cope; some are laboriously working out the pitches and writing the letter names above the notes whilst others are using oral-aural skills by committing passages to memory (they have already heard the tune many times before in the lead up to this activity) or copying others who have picked up the parts already. I speak to a group of boys:

**AG:** (*To Stuart the bass player*) So you've worked the part out by ear have you?

**Nick:** (*At the electric piano*) Yeah but he can't read the music...

**AG:** Does that matter in this type of music?

**Stuart:** No – as long as you remember it all...

**AG:** Who reads music here out of any of you?

(*Both keyboard players and the xylophone player indicate that they do.*)

**AG:** Do you read all these notes when you are playing this sort of music?

**Ian:** (*Keyboard player*) ...Well not really...

I spend the rest of the lesson in the main classroom, hearing group performances of the calypso and notice that only one group of girls truly utilises notation in the act of performance; most boys and girls have committed their part to memory and never once refer to it.

The emphasis on notation was so dominant in this department that it was valued above any other possible forms of expression as the following reveals:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 7 observation***

**9.10:** Pupils have to look at a short pattern consisting of crotchets and quavers whilst listening to a very slightly different pattern tapped out by the teacher. They have to say where it is different and how. This is a difficult task and many lose focus immediately; they find it too hard, especially as they are expected to answer using the correct terminology. It is noticeable that more boys volunteer answers, either with hands up or by shouting out, but most of these contributions are clearly wild guesses rather than thoughtful responses. The girls seem less willing to volunteer an answer unless they are sure to get it correct; those that aren't confident do not raise their hands. One boy wants to answer the question by saying single and double notes but when he is told to convert this into crotchets and quavers he gets totally confused and gives up. Another boy can say back the rhythm in his own language of doo and da-da but when he is told that

he has to turn this into notational vocabulary, he also falters.

**9.14:** The task is clearly failing and the majority have lost attention. The HoD gets them back on track by getting them to clap the rhythm in a constant cycle but many perform it inaccurately and so overall the activity sounds a mess. The HoD also tries to get pupils to vocalise the pattern in terms of saying ‘1..2&1..2&1..2..1&2..’ but again this fails with many saying it wrongly, both accidentally and deliberately! When he asks how many beats in a bar there are, several boys shout out ‘Three!’(probably because they can hear three sounds in many of the bars). By now there is a lot of fidgeting, yawning, and a few silly noises from boys. I don’t see one child really paying attention – they appear bored and distracted.

**9.18:** The HoD changes activity. When I later asked him to reflect upon this activity he perceived the majority of pupils to have been using the correct terminology and performing the rhythms successfully.

#### *8.43 Pupils on the Use of Notation*

Contributions from KS3 students were mostly very negative. Boys were openly critical of their personal lack of ability:

**Reece (Suburban Street/Yr7):** The structure of chords... I just don’t get chords... I get playing the drums and hitting everything and it makes a noise...

**Leroy (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I can play a guitar ‘cos you don’t have to read music... I find it easier not to look at the notes...

**Callum (Rural Country/Yr7):** Sometimes I find it a bit complicated ‘cos you have to do a piece of work without writing the notes down... and trying to find out what the notes are is difficult... the letter names... sometimes you’re expected to keep going... but I find it hard.

**Luke (Rural Country/Yr7):** I’m not very good at the reading side of the music... or the composition side when it’s about writing actual music down on staves...

One boy also suggested that it was something that girls accepted unquestioningly as part of learning in music and even might like (although no evidence of this emerged from observations):

**Lewis (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Sometimes when we've got to do... stuff about pitch and rhythm... well the girls don't all mind that but the boys... we get bored 'cos we wanna do something else...

Meanwhile three girls also said that learning notation was a pointless activity and did not contribute to improving musicality:

***Seaside Town Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Diana:** We get a sheet of notes and all we do is have a test on it every single time... it's like this is A and this is C... and we do that like every week...

**Chanel:** Then we get a comment on how well we're doing at it...

**Charlotte:** I don't think that we're even learning that much by doing this ...

Only two students expressed a liking for notation and gender was not an issue since one was a musically advanced boy instrumentalist and the other a girl with no particular instrumental skills:

**James (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I like theory... I'm all right about it...

**Tia (Seaside Town/Yr8):** I quite like learning how to read music...

In order to confirm that memorisation practices took precedence over reading notation in the Year 9 calypso performance task at Rural Country, students were asked an additional question in interview about how they had used the notation. The following exchanges were typical of the pupils' responses:

***Rural Country Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Grace:** Well I can read the notes, but to play it fast, I tend to memorise it...

**Holly:** We know how it goes 'cos we've heard it a lot of times.

**Sarah:** I can work out the notes but I don't really play from them... sometimes I

look at the music when I've got lost to find my starting note again... I always know where I am in it though.

**Jenny:** Yeah, when I play I do it mainly from memory... I get lost if I try to look at the music as I play... I can't keep up when we're playing quite fast.

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Robert:** I just remember as much as I can and refer to the music at times...

**Joe:** Yeah I say mostly I do it from memory 'cos I've got a fairly simple part... they're doing more complex parts... but I'm more keeping the beat... I remember some of it but if I get lost I look up and know where I am.

**Kevin:** 'Cos I play piano, I try to look at the music as that's what you're meant to do... but especially the first part... I just know it... so I like look at what the others are doing and concentrate more on keeping in time with them.

Of particular concern here was the possible effect that this notation-centric policy was having upon pupils' likelihood of taking KS4 music although only one voiced this:

**Mark (Rural Country/Yr9):** Well I didn't (*choose GCSE*) because there's a lot about writing down chords and notes rather than just playing the music...

The few KS4 girls who commented were unanimously anxious about whether their notational skills were up to the job for their courses:

**Jasmine (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I nearly dropped music 'cos I thought that everyone was better than me and I didn't know what I was doing... I can't read notes so I have to do everything out of my head.

**Marion (Seaside Town/BTEC):** It's not that I don't like it... but it's the music theory and notes... I find it hard...

In contrast the only KS4 boy to express any concern possessed excellent conventional instrumental skills (Grade 6+ standard) and was unnecessarily anxious about his ability to use notation in composing tasks (although not a statutory requirement in the GCSE course it appeared to be of concern to him):

**Tom (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I prefer performing to composing as I find it hard to write music down even though I read it really well...

## 8.5 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has examined both listening and appraising and the reading and writing of notation in relation to gender and school music with specific reference to data emerging from this study. Important outcomes re listening and appraising include that:

- Although the majority of teachers (as in 1993) believed that girls and boys were equally successful in this discipline, the number had reduced in the current survey with more respondents believing one or other to be superior.
- Some current respondents indicated that girls' preferences for this activity had decreased by Year 9 whereas a tiny minority suggested that boys' had improved.
- Once again popular discourses surrounding gendered attributes were common (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et al., 2005, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007); many respondents (including those who argued equity) described girls as possessing better concentration, memory retention and literacy skills alongside a greater tolerance of a wide range of styles.
- Many teachers agreed that boys were more vocal when answering questions, as confirmed by classroom observations. However some respondents' assertions that boys' verbal answers were more insightful were not borne out in observations since they often proffered irrelevant or incorrect answers whilst their vocabulary was generally far more limited and less subject specific than that used by many girls (Skelton et al., 2007).
- The notion that KS4 boys are musically superior remained evident in this area since several respondents argued that older boys' listening skills outstripped those of girls'. Once again this was argued despite no tangible proof emanating from either departmental or national examination data.
- Very few KS3 students remarked upon this activity indicating that it lacked importance, did not provoke strong feelings or was so embedded within other activities that it was not perceived as a separate form of musical engagement. Of those who did comment, the majority were Year 7 girls whose views were diverse, expressing anything from reasonable levels of enjoyment to utter

dislike. This somewhat contrasted with the dominant stereotypical view as expressed by some teacher-respondents, where girls were generally regarded as far more engaged and successful than boys.

- The small number of KS4 comments were solely from GCSE students who were undertaking a paper that tested these specific skills as part of their final examination. Boys were predominantly negative about this aspect of the course whereas girls expressed a wider range of feelings.

Important outcomes regarding the use of notation include that:

- Teachers' views on whether boys or girls utilised notation more successfully had not radically altered between the surveys with a substantial minority of just over a third suggesting that girls were more successful and around two-thirds suggesting no gender differences.
- The minority believing girls to be more successful, and indeed many of those who indicated gender equity, suggested that girls possessed attributes likely to ensure success in using notation. These included high levels of effort and diligence (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et al., 2005, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007) paired with a greater likelihood of having learnt a conventional instrument that required such knowledge (Mills, 1997, Hallam, 1998b, Hallam & Prince, 2000, Bray, 2000). Boys were also identified by respondents as being more likely to encounter and use informal notations, including guitar and drum tabs.
- KS3 pupils' comments were predominantly negative towards the necessity of using notation in their work whilst those few emanating from KS4 were primarily from girls and emphasised personal inadequacies. Since no specific questions were asked about notation in interview, it is hypothesised that those choosing to comment were more likely to be harbouring concerns.
- Technological programmes utilising formal notation such as Sibelius were identified as being more popular with girls whereas boys were seen to prefer the visual and aural aspects of sequencing packages (Armstrong, 2008, 2011).
- In observations it was only amongst highly able instrumentalists that notation was seen to be used with confidence and this was regardless of gender. Although it may be true that more girls learn traditional instruments and consequently access notation via this means, many teachers' perceptions that girls excel in this respect may simply be for this reason and not because they are more diligent,



motivated or determined to engage with it in reality.

- In KS3 classroom observations in Rural Country, where notation featured in most activities, numerous pupils (and almost as many girls as boys) were seen to be learning melodies by rote, peer copying or working from letter names, despite their teacher believing otherwise. However, girls did not confess this matter as openly as boys and this potentially indicates that it is not so acceptable for them to admit failure in this respect (whereas many boys happily reveal that they cannot or will not use notation).
- Unlike any KS4 boys, some KS4 girls expressed worries about their failure to succeed in this area whereas their male counterparts appeared either highly confident, being outstanding instrumentalists (as observed in both GCSE groups running in the focus schools), or never used formal notation in their work (as observed in both BTEC courses).

## **Chapter 9: Musical Identities, Musical Genres and Gender**

This chapter examines respondents' beliefs about various musical genres and the observable behaviours that result from engaging with them. In particular it considers how personal identity (despite overlapping with *all* aspects of musical engagement) is a powerful determinant of both teachers' and pupils' choices regarding those musics that are deemed acceptable for use within the classroom environment.

Initially, teachers' past musical experiences, training and interests are examined in relation to the musical genres that they prefer to utilise in the classroom. Student's tolerance of, or resentment towards (and possible non-cooperation in), such musics are then considered. In particular, how teachers' choices may conflict with pupils' individual or peer-group identities is germane especially since public shows of musical affiliation assume greater importance during adolescence (Bennett, 2000, Tarrant et al., 2001b), being key to judgements concerning 'in-group' or 'out-group' membership (Tarrant et al., 2002: 140).

The latter sections of the chapter focus upon how these issues surface within the classroom when pupils are expected to engage in four umbrella genres that dominate the mainstream curriculum; classical, pop, world and jazz musics.

### **9.1 Musical Identities and Genres**

Since complex issues appear to lie at the heart of pupils' acceptance or rejection of the musics that they experience as part of the school curriculum, social identity theory (as described in section 1.31) may assist us in understanding the matter more clearly (Tajfel, 1978a, 1981). Like all other areas of individuality, a person's musical identity (or multiple identities) will be shaped by multifarious factors<sup>45</sup>.

### **9.2 Musical Identities and Genres in this Study**

Although the limitations of the survey prohibited any meaningful assessment of survey respondents' identities, it was possible to explore this phenomenon amongst adult interviewees in the focus schools. Indeed they were specifically questioned about their

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<sup>45</sup> For more details on this see, amongst others: Green (1999b), Hargreaves et al. (2002, 2003), Lamont (2002), O'Neill (2002), Tarrant et al. (2001b, 2002).

training, interests and experiences in order to consider how these might have informed the sorts of curricula and pedagogies that they promoted.

Pupils were not asked about their musical inclinations outside of school since curriculum content was predominantly determined by the teachers in the focus departments, however it was also presumed that these would naturally surface in the interview conversations. In fact students made a substantial 73 comments about music in relation to their private lives; 44 came from KS3, 29 from KS4 and equally from girls and boys alike. This was a large number when compared to the far smaller amount (22) collected in relation to the music that they encountered within the curriculum (see section 9.55) and denotes the salience of personal musical identity at secondary level (Bennett, 2000, Lamont 2002, North et al., 2000, Tarrant et al., 2002, O'Neill, 2002).

Just 10 survey respondents referred to their students' personal preferences, suggesting both a failure on the part of many teachers to appreciate the profound effect that an individual's musical inclinations may have upon their willingness to engage in school music or how teachers' choices might dramatically influence pupil participation, both positively and negatively (Jaffurs, 2004). It should also be noted that outcomes from the Musical Futures case studies (Hallam et al., 2011: 9) revealed that a substantial number of students (43%) believed that teachers valued pupils generic interests through having to work with their personal choices. Meanwhile 81% of interviewed teachers admitted that these classroom interactions had increased their awareness of the musics that their students engaged with and enjoyed outside of school.

### *9.21 Teachers' Musical Identities and Personal Philosophies*

As expected, the personal profiles of the interviewed teachers from the second stage of research were diverse; although some level of formal musical training underpinned all of their experiences, this had affected them in very different ways and a disparate range of classroom practices appeared to have resulted. However, most tended to discuss the effect of their musical histories and interests upon their curriculum content choices rather than upon their pedagogies which they often (mistakenly) presumed were strategies common to all teachers as part of wider professional practice.

### 9.211 Suburban Street

Although the fairly newly qualified HoD came from a very privileged musical background (being formally trained in trumpet and piano and having professional singers as parents) he nonetheless rejected a performance pathway in order to take a music degree where he could explore his interests in composition and technology. He understood that this formal route was not ideal for many students however:

**Mr Benotti (Suburban Street):** Performing doesn't have to be all about getting exam grades and playing in orchestras... if that is your thing then great but for a lot of young people it clearly isn't...

As previously identified, Mr. Benotti's KS3 curriculum was extremely practical and technological with a focus upon developing aural skills. He also demonstrated preferences for musics of the 20<sup>th</sup> century onwards, especially in terms of popular culture; areas of study included such topics as 'Live Band Covers', 'Minimalism', 'Performing Popular Songs', 'Salsa and Samba' and 'Computers and Jazz'.

**Mr Benotti (Suburban Street):** I don't feel that I am particularly trapped in the grasp of classical music and all that it brings with it either... I like a wide range of music and appreciate that there are many ways of accessing and reproducing them through all sorts of methods...

According to the gendered framework (Table 4) it was hypothesised that Mr. Benotti's wide musical interests and understanding of young peoples' preferred practices had led him to develop an essentially masculine-gendered ethos; this included the establishment of a pop-orientated curriculum that was dominantly delivered via practical and technological means and in which pupils' personal musical interests were frequently exploited. In contrast, the other departmental teacher, and former HoD, came from a less privileged environment having no musical forebears to influence his choices:

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** Well at the age of five a piano arrived at home... I learnt how to play it... I didn't have any lessons... I've no idea how I learnt which is why technically I'm not brilliant... I then started violin in junior

school which was on a council estate where I lived... it was pretty unusual to do that but then I was lucky to go to the boys grammar school that had a wonderful reputation for music... and I started singing in the choir, playing in the orchestra and generally I was involved in all sorts of things... then when I went to teacher training college they happened to need a bassoonist so I took that up...

Despite having experienced various informal musical experiences throughout his early life, Mr Hayward seemed to have greater reverence for the traditional routes of musical progression amongst his students and he continually extolled the virtues of those who were achieving high performance standards. Although none of his lessons were formally observed he indicated a liking for teaching performing and composing via technological means and a dislike of singing in the classroom (both masculine-gendered traits) but also believed in pupils learning the rudiments of formal notation (a feminine-gendered characteristic). Without explicitly saying so, Mr Hayward also showed a greater preference for those musical genres that utilised formal notation (a feminine-gendered trait) rather than popular styles and the more informal practices that were related to them, of which he was somewhat derogatory:

**AG:** Do your early experiences make you quite tolerant of kids in the classroom who want to learn informally rather than through formal instrumental lessons?

**Mr Hayward:** No, in fact exactly the opposite... particularly where the peripheral instruments are concerned... electric guitar, drums... I am very insistent that kids actually learn these properly and do their grades like in Rock School... I think they tend, on electric guitar, to say lets learn another riff this week and I'm not sure that there's rigour involved like there is in learning other instruments... that does bother me... it's learning the formal stuff which builds up a subject knowledge which can be used at GCSE and onwards from there...

Despite working within the confines of a predominantly masculine-gendered curriculum I hypothesise that Mr. Hayward, utilised a more feminine-gendered pedagogy than his HoD. Although it was not possible for me to assess how this affected pupils' enthusiasm for the subject and consequently pupil take-up of music at KS4, I would also suggest that his approaches were better tolerated by girls than boys in general.

### 9.212 Seaside Town

This KS3 curriculum lacked any proper technological input despite being practically orientated and mainly focused upon the development of aural rather than notational skills. Although it was originally established and documented by the acting HoD, the curriculum was almost exclusively delivered and assessed by another teacher (an ex-HoD) who had a conventional musical upbringing but also experience of a technological career outside of teaching:

**Mrs Asaaf (Seaside Town):** I took a BA in music at Brunel, finishing in 2002. I then did all sorts of IT jobs before taking a PGCE at Middlesex University in 2005-6.

Despite Mrs Asaaf's obvious abilities in this respect the department was not exploiting her skills since she was confined to delivering the curriculum via traditional classroom means. The failure of other departmental staff to bring their very different musical profiles to the KS3 pupils in order to create greater diversity was also an issue and had the potential to affect KS4 option choices negatively. Acting HoD, Ms Renton, argued that her time was better spent with the BTEC students due to her greater knowledge of the requirements of this course. Ms Renton had wide musical tastes and her enjoyment of utilising the more informal methods and approaches that she used with her KS4 groups might have held great appeal for younger pupils:

**Ms Renton (Seaside Town):** My musical tastes are quite broad and commercial... I use stuff from the 1950s to the modern day... this music is what I like and it helps to inform the kids' work... I like the way you can hear something on the radio and think... ooh, we could use that... and the BTEC kids do the same and they come in and suggest all sorts of interesting things to do...

However she appeared to believe in the use of a more formal and traditional curriculum and pedagogy in the earlier secondary years, as she had experienced at school:

**Ms Renton (Seaside Town):** I think that the way I teach music is strangely similar to the way that I was taught... because I think that it works... well it

worked for me... but I've probably picked up other traits on the way because you are influenced by the schools in which you work.

Nevertheless the musical education that she described as having 'worked for her', followed very conventional paths and was rather different to that of her current pupils. Since they did not have comparable formal instrumental grounding or extra-curricular opportunities, the suitability of transferring such teaching methods seemed somewhat questionable therefore:

***Ms Renton (Seaside Town):*** I didn't start to get involved in music until Year 7 of secondary school where I got to learn the saxophone. It then just took off... I wanted to be in the dance band and music just provided me with another life... very quickly I decided that I wanted to be a music teacher and then it was GCSEs, 'A' levels and on to a music degree and a teacher training year...

Unlike the HoD and in agreement with Mrs Asaaf, Mr Cooper (who also taught no KS3) seemed very aware that the curriculum needed to become more flexible if it was to keep students' interest alive:

***Mr. Cooper (Seaside Town):*** You've always got HoD restraints in a department in terms of their philosophy... it's not necessarily a bad thing... but I confess that I've got my own agenda... I frequently find that when we go off at a tangent in the classroom... well the tangent can be far more successful than my original intention and they get more out of it... I enjoy that kind of spontaneous work.

His flexible approach seemed to have been inspired by experiences outside of schools:

***Mr Cooper (Seaside Town):*** I studied classical guitar – although in my teaching there's not much call for that... but my interests involve alternative music... and classical music as well... I struggle a bit with pure pop... but my tastes are very broad... I started playing at secondary school but not very seriously so I came to it all rather late... I trained as a mature student and in most of my work... well it's all been based in education but not always in schools... I'm putting a project together for a prison... where I'll work with them recording sounds... and I'm

going to try and get them to interact with the sounds of the prison with loads of instruments and their voices... I do enjoy that kind of work because it's very free... you can't so easily initiate that sort of thing in the school environment.

The overall effect of these teachers' differing pedagogies across various pupil age-groups in Seaside Town thus appeared to have created a split in the gendering of this department's ethos according to the conceptual framework (Table 4); with a dominance of feminine-gendered aspects at KS3 giving way to more masculine-gendered approaches at KS4. How pupils' option choices were affected by this situation is fully explored in Chapter 11.

### *9.213 Rural Country*

The more limited and antiquated KS3 curriculum offered by this department not only lacked an emphasis upon the integration of skills (especially composition) as demanded by the National Curriculum for Music (DFE, 2011) but also appeared more challenging for those who, for whatever reasons, did not wish to engage with conventional musical notation. Such a strong emphasis was placed on this that it dominated to the exclusion of almost all other aspects of musical learning. Meanwhile little reference was made to other musics in Years 7 and 8 apart from those emanating from a white, middle-class, British heritage (belonging to either the classical canon or pop classics dating from the 1960s and 70s). The HoD said of this scheme of work:

**Mr. Brewer (Rural Country):** I've spent lots of holidays continually re-writing this and it's been a labour of love... trying to identify the natural processes involved in learning and engaging in sound and then how to read music... it's like learning a sonata or concerto or whatever... you have to keep working at it.

Mr Brewer's musical interests and initial training as an instrumental teacher certainly help to explain his almost fanatical obsession with the acquisition of formal performance skills via the study of the Western classical canon:

**Mr Brewer (Rural Country):** I got a place at the Guildhall School of Music on the performer's course but couldn't get the discretionary grant... I did a year's



violin teaching in Hampshire then I got a place at Trinity College of Music... I then did a PGCE course in Winchester and when I started here in 1975 I was the violin peripatetic teacher and also for all primary schools in the catchment area... then after four years I became temporary head of department because he went off on a sabbatical... and when he left I took over in 1981... I play a lot of chamber music and have played in string quartets with friends in the area since 1976... I'm a member of the local chamber orchestra... a friend of mine is an opera conductor so I've done lots of Verdi, Puccini...

Despite her more limited effect upon the KS3 curriculum, the other full-time departmental member had a very difficult musical profile. After a conventional start to her music education she quickly branched out into other areas:

***Ms Flatley (Rural Country):*** I was taught the piano from the age of six and by the time I was 16 I was an Associate of the London College of Music having gained a gold medal distinction at Grade 8... I also have Grade 8 Distinction in oboe and I'm quite a high standard church organist... I studied for a Bachelor of Science honours degree in music at City University in London which was quite innovative at the time because there were lots of modules, like sound recording, music therapy, the psychology of music, Indian music and so on... then I moved away from music for about 10 years into travel and tourism... I think that I just wanted to go somewhere else really... I then decided, as I turned 30, to come in to teaching so I did an Open University PGCE... then two years at one school... then the position came up here and I'm now in my third year.

She certainly held wide musical interests too:

***Ms Flatley (Rural Country):*** I love anything from 1880 onwards... from the impressionists, through to minimalism, electronic music 20<sup>th</sup> century stuff, new wave music and into popular music, especially stuff that uses IT... music technology is something that I've always been interested in... but just because I'm interested in 20<sup>th</sup> century music doesn't mean that I don't know how to write a Bach chorale... or about the troubadours in the Renaissance period...

Nevertheless many of her talents were not fully exploited in the department, except for her technological skills and these only in very specific circumstances (see section 7.42).

### *9.22 Teachers on Pupils' Musical Identities*

Of the 10 teachers who commented, there was much agreement with both pupils' perceptions about gendered preferences and research outcomes suggesting that boys are more orientated towards rock/rap and girls towards ballads/chart pop (DeNora, 2000, Colley, 2008):

***School 29:*** What the kids are buying and down-loading – well boys prefer rock, dance and acoustic blues styles... girls relate well to RnB and chart pop/rock.

***School 37:*** Girls like RnB, songs from the musicals... boys like hip-hop and rock music more.

***School 47:*** Girls favour RnB and hip-hop whereas boys prefer rock/indie.

***School 48:*** It depends on the genre; boys like RnB and girls, pop.

One interviewed teacher also noted changes in musical preferences that occurred across KS3 and the problems this created both in terms of their acceptance of the music they encountered in school and the peer-pressure that resulted:

***Ms Flatley (Rural Country):*** In Year 7 they're more easily manipulated if you like because... they haven't had as many outside influences, or even in-school influences, as they will have done by the time they get to Year 9... then they're beginning to form their own opinions about many things... there's this peer pressure to like this or that band... play this instrument... those inhibitions aren't there in Year 7.

The notion that young people develop inhibitions in terms of their musical tastes and practices is a pertinent one since it concurs with other research outcomes suggesting that musical identity becomes increasingly pressing during adolescence, especially in

terms of in-group membership and peer approval (North et al., 2000, Tarrant et al., 2002).

### *9. 23 Pupils' Musical Identities*

Many KS3 girls said that RnB was their favourite genre (although several boys expressed a liking too) whilst the majority of boys championed either a range of rock styles, from Indie to Death Metal (this genre was exclusive to the male population) or urban genres such as Rap, Dubstep and Hip-hop (just a few girls favoured these). Individuals also mentioned liking chart pop, Techno, Trance, Drum n' bass, plus sixties and eighties music too.<sup>46</sup> For most students there seemed little or no connection between their musical identities outside of school and their participation in educational music with just a couple of boys mentioning that they brought some of their rock guitar skills into school. Nevertheless, two KS4 boys expressed a growing awareness of, and wish to explore, other musics outside of the expected norms:

**Aiden (Rural Country/GCSE):** I've been into everything... Hard rock, Heavy Metal, Minimalism, like Philip Glass, Hip-hop...

**George (Rural Country/GCSE):** I like anything that's interesting and sort of grabs my attention... but I hate pop, like chart stuff – where the singers don't write their own songs...

Only one boy (an advanced instrumentalist) referred to listening to the classical canon:

**Gareth (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I like classical music... I like Debussy...

Half of the comments (37) from boys and girls alike, remarked upon the perceived musical tastes of the opposite sex; 31 were from Year 9 students or older, further indicating that these issues became more salient as the adolescence years progress. Views expressed by the majority conformed to typical gender stereo-typing:

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<sup>46</sup> Preferences were similar to those expressed by students in the Musical Futures research (Hallam et al., 2011: 19) in which 41% preferred pop or rock music and 37% RnB, rap or hip hop. For examples of pupils' statements see pages 96-99 of the document.

***Seaside Town Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Ashley:** I think that some girls like the same as us but some like gentle stuff... quiet music.

**Bruce:** ... some of them like what we do... but most of them like calm music...

**Regan:** I was gonna say that girls like pop music like 'Girls Aloud' and RnB... but boys like bands and stuff...

**Bruce:** 'cos we like things like heavy metal...

**Ashley:** ... and hip-hop...

***Seaside Town Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Olivia:** Boys like rough stuff and girls like gentler things...

**AG:** What do you mean?

**Olivia:** Boys like Kings of Leon and stuff like that...

**Sheryl:** ... and girls like Rhianna and Beyonce...

**AG:** Is that always true for all girls and boys?

*(They chorus 'No'.)*

**Sadie:** I like some things with a beat... like my dad likes the Beatles...

**Sheryl:** ...Oh no!

**Sadie:** ...but I do like some of the things that he listens to... like soft music as well apart from jazz and classical...

**Sheryl:** I like Eminem... like a lot of boys do... I like it when they talk and sing at the same time in songs...

**AG:** So do boys like Rhianna then?

*(They chorus 'No' again.)*

**Olivia:** Yeah some do... my step-brother does... even though he thinks that he's all hard and that...

**Olivia:** Yeah, boys like Eminem, Professor Green and stuff like that...

**Sadie:** ... and more hard rock stuff too...

**Sheryl:** Some girls like to be really 'girly' and listen to ballerina type music... but most boys would never listen to that...

**Mirjeta (Seaside Town//Yr8):** Boys like rock music, crazy music... so much...

**Morris (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I think that girls like more romantic music.

**Bradley (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Girls like different sorts of music... I think that they like fancy music... boys wanna make loud music and girls quiet...

Differences between boys' and girls' musical tastes certainly have the potential to intrude upon their willingness to work in a variety of genres in the classroom, not only within the classical idiom but across the various popular and world genres too. Green's interviews with boys revealed that they almost exclusively favoured loud, fast music, preferably with a strong beat (1997: 181) whilst they also believed girls to prefer soft, slow music (1997: 158). Although some evidence exists to show that girls like slow, romantic, popular love songs (DeNora, 2000) which potentially explains their greater tolerance of classical music and ballads, they also express an equal preference for dance music (Frith 1983). It is more likely therefore that no pupils appear willing to display fixed tastes, with most young people preferring to approve of what is recent and 'cutting edge' (Richards, 1998).

Evidence of gendered preferences in action in the focus schools was limited since KS3 curricula were very prescriptive and largely prohibited personal choice. However a BTEC lesson in Seaside Town, in which pupils reviewed the filming of their recent ensemble performances, was most enlightening:

***Diary extract: Seaside Town BTEC observation***

We watch the first ensemble; the group consists of all the boys and just one girl performing the rock song 'It's My Life' by Bon Jovi. There are three male singers (one of whom also plays a large tom-tom), another tom-tom player, a drummer, a keyboard player and two guitarists, one who is strumming chords, and Alicia who takes the guitar lead. The performance is very loud and visually animated as there is lots of drumming. The boys are (quite fairly) critical of their own and each others vocal tuning but watch attentively, as do the girls. Next we watch the second ensemble recording which consists of six girls performing the ballad 'Your Song' modelled on Ellie Goulding's version. There are four singers (who take it in turn to sing solos and harmonise in choruses), a keyboard player and a violinist giving a gentle, calm and static rendition. The girls watch carefully, including Alicia, but the boys maintain a low level of chat and giggling, appearing rather bored; clearly they don't like this sort of music and therefore they can't be bothered to focus upon the performance.

Despite being given complete freedom to choose material, a gender divide occurred here for the same reasons as Green formerly identifies (1997); the boys wanted to perform a loud, physically animated rock track using guitars and percussion whilst most girls opted for a soft, gentle ballad that utilised traditionally feminine-gendered instruments (voices, violin and keyboard). Just one female guitarist chose to cross this divide and consequently she was accepted as an 'honorary boy' because of her masculine-gendered skills. I later discussed these performances with the boys and girls involved in single-sexed environments:

*Seaside Town BTEC boys' discussion*

**Arthur:** Well a lot of them prefer to do gentle stuff... not like us boys... we like to get into it... girls like to do gentle duets and stuff...

**Adam:** ... like Justin Bieber...

**Arthur:** It's because they like romantic music about love and stuff but we like something much different.

**AG:** How would you sum up the music that boys most seem to prefer then?

**Adam:** We like heavy stuff...

**Arthur:** Yeah, stuff like Tupac...

**Marcus:** I think it's superior...

**AG:** In what way exactly?

**Arthur:** Well the music that we like to do... it's full of adventure...

**Marcus:** Yeah... it's adventurous...

**Adam:** It's got more flair and speed and energy...

**Jacob:** ...and heavy bass...

**Marcus:** Boys like more of a bass line too... the girls' song just didn't have any of that. I think that girls are very different... because when we were picking the song to do... well it was supposed to be one song for all of us... but then we had to split the class up because we wanted the Bon Jovi song and we all voted for that and then the girls wanted to do the Ellie Goulding song... which is fine... but as soon as the Bon Jovi song was suggested they all screamed 'No, no, no' and as soon as they suggested the Ellie Goulding one ... well we said that was a load of rubbish... so it was a tie and we had to form two groups... I think it was better that it turned out that way really because apart from Alicia, we can't agree.

**AG:** So why do some, if not all, girls choose different music to the boys?

**Arthur:** Well we like to look at girls obviously (*the others snigger*)... but we like good music made by guys... although we're clearly not gay... but girls like to look at boys... when they're singing... and it's all to do with fancying them and stuff...

**Marcus:** I think that it's really all about marketing though... like the more pop side of it is to make loads of money so they get someone like Justin Beiber... to make girls like him... and if they go mad about him then he'll sell a lot more copies of his records. Well boys... perhaps some of them are going to like him... but most don't... 'cos it's not about that stuff with us...

Despite confirming their preferences for fast and loud music using drums and electric guitars (Green, 1997: 183) these boys also expressed two important ideas: firstly that they were not gay for liking music made by males since they preferred those macho genres, known to construct masculinity<sup>47</sup>; and secondly that girls (unlike boys) were too affected by extra-musical delineations since they idolised pop stars for non-musical attributes such as their looks<sup>48</sup>. Girls' comments did not confirm this perception since none mentioned any aspects of fandom however they did agree that boys' musical tastes were different to theirs and that most were intransigent in terms of the sorts of music that they were willing play:

#### ***Seaside Town BTEC girls' discussion***

**AG:** So do you think that boys like to play the same sorts of music as you girls?

**Chantelle:** I don't think that there's much difference...

**Marion:** I don't think that they do like the same...

**Jamie:** They like heavy metal...

**Paula:** I don't think they're much different but if they've already decided that they don't like that sort of music or that particular song then they won't do it ...

**Chantelle:** They want rapping in it or a really heavy beat in the background...

**Jamie:** Yes they really like heavy metal or rap...

**Marion:** ... and a bit of hip-hop...

**Primrose:** They don't want to do a ballad type song...

**Hayley:** They veer towards... rock music... we choose more gentle music.

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<sup>47</sup> See footnote 32 on page 134 for relevant literature.

<sup>48</sup> For more information about girls' fandom in music see Frith & McRobbie (1978), McRobbie (1981, 1991), Shepherd (1987), McClary & Walser (1990).

### 9.3 A History of Musical Genres and the Curriculum

As detailed in section 4.1 music education in most schools was firmly entrenched in the ‘European serious tradition’ (Vulliamy & Lee, 1976: 33) for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the classical canon having dominated state music education since its initial establishment in 1870 (Cox, 1993, 2002). Nevertheless the wide acceptance and recognition of popular and world musics into the curriculum across the last 30 years has radically transformed the face of music in school.

Green’s survey (2002b) comparing teachers’ beliefs with those of her earlier research (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) confirmed that much had changed in a relatively short period of time, most notably in that the position of classical music, as the most dominant genre utilised in the classroom, had given way to pop. Teachers in the later survey had not suddenly lost their respect for the classics but now saw them as one of many genres via which musical learning could be accessed. There was also a general consensus that popular styles were easily accessible and appropriate in the teaching of many diverse musical concepts whilst their study was a valid part of celebrating modern day cultural heritage.

Despite this, some teachers detected problems with the use of pop, fearing ‘being seen as cultural intruders’ (Green, 2002a: 160) or unintentionally creating situations whereby pupil entrenchment along partisan lines occurred (as they fiercely defended particular musical sub-cultures). Many suggested that it was challenging to keep personal knowledge and resources up to date amongst rapidly changing trends (Green 2002a, 2008). One might also question the necessity of spending time engaging with something that is clearly thriving outside of school, with no need of educational intervention (Bowman, 2004). However it is the issue concerning many pupils’ reticence to engage with popular styles in class that appeared to puzzle many teachers.

Green (1988, 1997, 2002a, 2005) suggests that we can better understand this in the light of the ‘pop versus classical split’ that has evolved from a history of musical fetishism; the eliciting of unquestioning reverence and respect towards a hierarchy of apparently superior music. Traditionally it was Western art music that was fetishised and thus deemed to possess, ‘autonomous essences... of universality and natural greatness’ (1988: 87). However Green suggests that many of the older and more established popular styles have also become canonised and idealised as being more worthy of study than others (1988, 2005). This situation has created an unintentional



pitching within the classroom arena of well-known 'school' pop (with its now familiar norms and conventions) against lesser-known 'pupil' pop with its potentially threatening connotations. Meanwhile pupils are aware of a duality that exists between the discourses and practices of those musics chosen as suitable for study by teachers (which also tend to be products of their musical identities (Garnett, 2010)) and those that are not.

Green further suggests that the social structures of the school, and the act of schooling itself, cannot help but delineate music in a particular way, regardless of the genre being conveyed. Therefore experiencing popular styles in a formal classroom atmosphere, a world apart from their usual informal modes of production and reception, re-delineates the music and distorts the original nature of its meaning (1999b, 2005, 2006). She emphasises that the moment a teacher demands close scrutiny of a piece of music (regardless of its initial popularity amongst pupils), it will no longer be accepted by them since they will perceive having to 'study' it as relating to practices more obviously associated with the classical canon. As a consequence, the power of these delineations override the teacher's best intentions, resulting in a range of possible pupil responses; from musical celebration through to disinterested ambiguity, or even complete alienation.

#### **9.4 Musical Genres and Pedagogical Problems**

Issues of content aside, it appears that pedagogical strategies are crucial in determining how well musics may be received in the classroom. Green's later teacher survey (2002b) confirmed that two-thirds of those questioned believed that it was appropriate to use the same techniques for teaching classical (such as writing down music and performing it from formal notation (both known to be particularly unpopular activities with boys (Green, 1997)) as for pop (styles that more naturally associate themselves with informal practices such as self-teaching, listening and copying, improvising and collaborative group learning (Green 2002a, 2006, 2008)). They suggested that if pop and classical musics had equal worth then both must share certain essential qualities that would likewise demand similar methods of transmission and reception (2002b).

Once again the fetishising of much popular music is an issue here (Green, 1988, 2005); if some pop music is worthy of membership of the Western canon then it is automatically assumed that those methods of appreciation and performance more

appropriate to the latter, are relevant to the former. However Green also notes that these teachers did not appear to deliver the genres in the same way despite declaring this; in particular they emphasised the importance of the intra-musical content (or the inherent musical meaning) when teaching appreciation of the classics but an over-reliance upon the extra-musical associations (or the delineated musical meaning) when dealing with popular styles (see section 6.11 for more about musical meaning).

The core of the problem thus appears to revolve around a clash between the spontaneity of pop's usual methods of transmission and the instructional rigours that many teachers believe essential for musical learning (Bowman, 2004). Meanwhile it is hypothesised that the use of such pedagogic approaches in the transmission of popular genres, is liable to alienate greater numbers of boys since they appear more vociferous than girls in their rejection of all things classically-related, including those procedures normally associated with it (Tarrant et al., 2001a). As Green so aptly says of the use of pop music in school, 'in developing this new content, we have focused mainly on the music itself – the product – and have largely failed to notice the processes by which this product is transmitted' (2006: 107).

Evidence exists to show that this situation may be gradually improving as teachers with wider musical experiences and interests enter the classroom, being willing to work in genres that are their students' preferences rather than their own (Garnett, 2010, Hallam et al., 2011, D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014). However in the focus schools, all HoDs had traditional training and backgrounds as indeed did other departmental staff, regardless of age. Although this sample can hardly be considered representative of the profession as a whole it possibly indicates that there remains a preponderance of teachers with such profiles within the current education system, resulting in a greater likelihood of the perpetuation of classically-derived pedagogies (Hargreaves et al., 2003, Lamont & Maton, 2010, Wright & Davies, 2010).

### **9.5 The Four Key Curriculum Genres in this Study**

Teachers were specifically asked about their students' relationships with four main musical genres (classical, popular, world and jazz) and 163 responses resulted, with the largest number of comments referring to classical music and the least to jazz. Although the majority believed that pupils engaged equally well with all styles, some gender differences were perceived. This was particularly true of popular styles where the sorts

of music in which girls and boys wished to be involved were seen as being very different.

Only two teachers in the survey consistently argued that they believed it to be impossible to relate musical genres to gender alone, suggesting that there were multifarious influences at work (without specifically naming them):

*School 54:* These issues are more about background than gender alone.

*School 71:* This all depends on individual interest rather than just gender.

Just 22 students remarked upon genres (10 from KS3 and 12 from KS4); although interviewees were not specifically questioned about them it is indicative that they either did not feel particularly strongly about the musics that they experienced or viewed them as being outside of their remit since they were presumed to be chosen by their teachers. This was particularly true of KS3 pupils since just two girls contributed in this respect. The majority of KS4 comments revealed both boys and girls to be far more critical of certain genres however, especially classical and some world musics. In order to provide clarity, the small amount of students' contributions are viewed holistically whereas the larger number of teacher comments are divided into genre categories<sup>49</sup>.

#### *9.51 Teachers on Classical Music*

It should be recalled from section 4.3 that both modern-day teachers and those in L. Green's 1993 survey were in close agreement about this area of questioning. Around two-thirds from both studies believed there to be no difference between boys' and girls' willingness to be involved whilst a considerable minority considered girls more amenable. Of the 55 statements from current respondents, 28 argued that it was inappropriate to view the genre in the light of gender since pupil responses were linked to past experiential factors, especially involvement with playing instruments.

*School 44:* This depends on upbringing and socio-economic status.

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<sup>49</sup> For information about teachers and pupils views on classical, pop and world musics in the earlier study see Green (1997, pp.154-8 and pp. 171-181).

**School 67:** Those that engage (with classical music) are the instrumentalists.

**School 76:** In our extra-curricular groups boys do not moan about performing classical works.

A further 10 were adamant that both sexes were equal in their dislike of having to be involved with classical music; indeed this was the only genre that elicited such extensive negativity in the study:

**School 8:** Both find classical music uninspiring and they cannot relate to it. I always use it as part of my lessons but most are usually embarrassed by it.

**School 14:** At all key stages a negative response to classical music is given by boys and girls equally.

**School 28:** It is music from an entirely different culture for all our children and they don't respond well.

**School 48:** I haven't taught in a school where either group was willing to engage in this. A tiny minority is interested in classical music and within this minority a handful have been boys and a handful girls.

**School 67:** The majority of pupils switch off at the mention of classical music.

Nevertheless nine respondents were insistent that all pupils were equally responsive and involved if the music was presented appropriately:

**School 4 (Suburban Street):** It depends on how it is taught – the choice of piece and most importantly its presentation.

**School 29:** Our presentation is very interactive which appeals to all.

**School 65:** As with selecting the best books to engage boys and girls, spending time choosing appropriate classical music that appeals to both is important.

The choice of music was deemed by some teachers as the make or break factor, along with using the ‘correct’ approach. Musical Futures has indeed suggested that informal models of learning can be equally applicable to classical music (Green, 2008) however it appears that some teachers view the programme as ‘a pop/rock module rather than a pedagogical strategy’ (Zeserson et al., 2014). Meanwhile teacher-participants in Hallam’s longitudinal research suggested that they possessed neither the time nor confidence to take the pedagogy beyond its initial application, whereby it focused upon pupils’ musical interests in popular genres (Hallam et al., 2011: 52). Indeed little use of classical music was evident in lesson observations within the focus departments in this study, not even in the more classically-orientated Rural Country, and this may be indicative of the genre’s marked decline across all schools.

Of the two survey respondents indicating that boys and girls were equally willing to engage, both perceived differences in behavioural responses, particularly in terms of girls’ greater passivity:

***School 4 (Suburban Street):*** I suppose it could be said that girls are more likely to sit quietly listening to a piece of classical music but it depends on the choice of piece and its presentation.

***School 9:*** Both boys and girls are prepared to participate equally but girls give more considered responses when talking about it...

The 23 respondents believing girls to be more willingly involved also suggested that females tended towards open-mindedness whilst there was less peer pressure on them to conform to liking particular styles:

***School 7:*** Girls are more open and accepting of all things new but boys have more pre-conceived ideas.

***School 12:*** Boys, even at GCSE level, don’t seem as open-minded or willing to take classical music seriously.

***School 22:*** Girls do not feel as embarrassed about broadening their horizons.

**School 40:** Boys are more inclined to be led by peer group pressure – often dismissing any music with which they are unfamiliar.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls may not actually like classical music but they allow for the fact that it exists. Boys tend to pigeon hole and categorise everything – and if it doesn't fit into their world then it has no right to exist.

**School 77:** Girls are less involved in one particular style of music as summing up their musical identity.

Meanwhile girls' greater likelihood of playing classically-orientated instruments was also cited as a reason for their greater tolerance:

**School 10:** It's probably due to girls' greater instrumental take-up; both groups aren't very willing to work in this genre but girls show greater tolerance.

**School 43:** This is due to their greater involvement in graded exams which leads to greater familiarity with the classics.

**School 64:** Girls often learn instruments that enable them to play across a range of styles – this makes classical music more acceptable to these individuals.

Green's argument (1993, 1996/2010, 1997), suggesting that girls find themselves positively reflected in the performance opportunities offered by classical music, is echoed in these comments (see section 6.1). However she further contends that classical music itself, and not only the practices surrounding it, come to represent femininity and perhaps more radically, effeminacy, within the institution of the school (1999b:168). This assertion has serious implications for boys since it confirms that they risk their symbolic masculinity when participating; it is notable that in the current study only one respondent argued that boys show a positive disposition towards engaging in it.

### *9.52 Teachers on Popular Genres*

As in the 1993 survey, the majority of modern-day teachers believed that there were no

gender differences regarding willingness to be involved in pop styles, although this number had marginally increased. As a consequence, those perceiving boys to prefer these genres had slightly decreased whilst data regarding girls has remained constant. Teachers supplied 38 comments about gendered engagement with popular genres but only one indicated that other factors created discord between the sexes:

***School 20:*** The students are divided over different styles of pop music; not by gender but by peer groups...

Sixteen respondents said that all pupils liked pop styles as the following sample reveals:

***School 1:*** This is what they like and what they have been brought up on...

***School 8:*** All are willing to participate as long as it is what their social group is listening to or is current and on the radio.

***School 30:*** Some pupils in the final terms of Year 9 find all styles of music boring but most can be engaged through pop music - there is no distinction between boys and girls.

***School 44:*** As teenage social spheres revolve around popular music and its vocabulary, boys and girls easily engage with it...

A further nine were extremely aware of the very different genres in which girls and boys wished to engage:

***School 31:*** Girls seem happy to sing the latest pop/RnB/X factor songs. Boys are keen on rapping and making beats using ICT.

***School 51:*** This is the type of music that our students are familiar with. Girls generally want to sing along with backing tracks and boys perform in bands.

***School 53:*** Boys tend more towards rock/DJ-ing than pop – girls, vice versa.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Girls are a bit more accepting of its history however and can making connections across time and style. If boys don't see what it has to do with them here now they don't want to know. Boys particularly like rap/hardcore stuff/urban – girls like urban stuff too but the softer side of pop too – they still like a good ballad.

Although there was no consensus about which styles were favoured according to gender some respondents implied that girls' tastes were slightly more diverse and potentially lightweight, often being ballad and pop focused (De Nora, 2000). Again this denotes that in the classroom, girls may be easier to appease since they are more likely to accept the classic pop tunes that many teachers use. Indeed the only two statements supporting girls' greater involvement in pop styles suggested that boys' reticence concerned their likelihood of self-limitation through possessing narrow, niche interests:

**School 74:** Boys tend not to open up and give their opinions about their likes in pop music (possibly for fear of ridicule)...

**School 77:** Unlike girls, boys are very specific about exact artists and lots will not listen to anything that doesn't fit with their image.

Of the seven statements supporting boys' greater involvement with pop styles, these ranged from the greater physical outlets that they could supply through to role-modelling and its effect upon the up-take of associated instruments:

**School 7:** Boys like it because they can tap on the tables and cause disruption...

**School 9:** There has been a gradually developing tradition of rock bands which feature a large number of the boys and thus explains their dominance.

**School 62:** It's seen to be cool and there are many more male role models from these styles.

**School 64:** This is largely due to image – boys are more likely to associate certain instruments with certain culture.



One further respondent mentioned that boys participated in greater numbers but girls enjoyed pop music more passively. This statement ties in with the discourses that surround gender activity in popular genres and in which ‘inactive’ females idolise the highly ‘active’ males (Frith & McRobbie, 1978, McRobbie, 1991, Frith, 1983).

**School 3:** Although more boys play in rock bands the girls are very supportive and enjoy attending gig nights.

### *9.53 Teachers on World Musics*

The greatest difference in outcomes between the surveys occurred in this area. Around three-quarters of respondents believed boys and girls to be equally involved despite this number having fallen since 1993 (see section 4.3). However the minority perceiving girls to respond better had increased marginally whilst those believing boys to react likewise had grown from one, in 1993, to 11 currently.

Of the 37 supporting statements, 11 argued that since world musics were less familiar to many pupils they resulted in fewer prejudices when compared to those invoked by classical and popular genres:

**School 3:** All the children seem to enjoy world music both playing and listening.

**School 7:** An area of the unknown so they have no pre-conceptions...

**School 31:** The school is ethnically diverse and music from the Caribbean, Africa and India are all popular in class...

**School 64:** African music is particularly popular with both genders – everyone enjoys African drumming.

Perhaps more surprisingly, four respondents indicated that no pupils responded particularly well:

**School 67:** Pupils are not very responsive to these styles of music generally.

**School 62:** There is largely a mono-culture in this school – neither sex responds well.

It is hypothesised that this lack of acceptance may simply be the result of the implementation of inappropriate pedagogies that distort musical meaning, such as using formal notation in traditions that dominantly utilise oral-aural methods of transmission. A clear example of this was seen in the teaching of gamalan in Rural Country and potentially resulted in the alienation of some pupils, but most obviously more boys, due to its unnecessary and irrelevant references to note values:

***Diary extract: Rural Country Year 8 observation***

The teacher uses conventional pitch and rhythmic terminology to describe the musical strands involved. A group of boys, appear muddled about the values being used such as semi-breves, minims, crotchets and quavers. Although the teacher has previously assured me that all Year 8 children know these notational labels I am not convinced due to the puzzled faces. (In retrospect I wondered whether it might have been more appropriate for some students to have expressed things mathematically e.g. the melody moves in time with the beat, with decorative parts moving twice as fast and the drone sounding every four).

One respondent also stressed the importance of such musics in promoting gender equality, especially in areas that used masculine-gendered instruments such as drums:

**School 65:** When we introduced samba drums and African drumming in Year 7 we have tried hard to discourage the idea that drumming is a boys' pursuit.

However the 10 statements supporting the notion that boys were more engaged in world musics identified these sorts of instruments as being key factors in their positive involvement, especially in that they promote loud music-making, (known to be popular with boys (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997)):

**School 1:** Boys still show more of an interest in drumming and making loud noises than girls do. Since the main ideas behind world music examples are usually percussion based they enjoy it most.

**School 15:** Much world music (steel pans, tabla, djembe, samba drums) involves a physical requirement and expectant high volume which boys clearly enjoy...

**School 26:** When covering African drumming the boys are more confident when performing so also more responsive when listening in this style.

**School 28:** The world musics that we do such as African Drumming and Bhangra involve loud drums which boys naturally want to play more than girls.

One teacher even suggested differences in ability between boys and girls despite not indicating whether these were innate or culturally learnt:

**School 46:** As world music is often very rhythmic boys, progress better than girls.

However another indicated that not all types of world musics were popular with boys, especially gamelan which involves pitch differentiation and not just rhythmic performance:

**School 64:** I've had mixed success with gamelan – girls respond far better...

Meanwhile the aforementioned attributes of boys in terms of risk-taking and rule-breaking (see section 2.2) were also identified as important in their success:

**School 44:** I think because these styles are unknown, many pupils like exploring the cultures but boys are stronger at exploration and risk-taking in them.

Of the five comments supporting girls' greater willingness for involvement, they once again revolved around stereotypical attributes:

**School 25:** Girls are often more open to less familiar musics.

**School 36:** World music hasn't been much explored in the past but girls find it easier to engage with it and are far more tolerant.

**School 48:** Boys respond better to start off with but girls seem to stick at it and are more keen on a deeper exploration...

#### 9.54 Teachers on Jazz

As Green did not include this area in her 1993 study, direct comparisons cannot be made however her argument concerning boys' perceived superior ability to improvise as part of composition (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) is paramount since extemporisation is a key component of the genre. As in classical music, a strong but largely untold history of women's participation in jazz exists, in which, despite prejudice and exclusion, some have managed to operate<sup>50</sup>. Once again Green (1997: 73) cites the interruptive qualities of traditional feminine delineations as possessing the power to adversely affect our perceptions of women as successful particularly as arrangers and improvisers when participating in this genre.

Although in the current study the majority of respondents believed all pupils to display equal involvement, a fair-sized minority said that boys were more positive whilst only a few suggested girls to be likewise (see section 4.3). Just 33 statements were made by teachers about this genre, potentially indicating that it was either least problematic, or simply less utilised in the classroom. Indeed although Blues featured strongly on the list of KS3 curriculum topics of both surveyed and focus schools, more extensive work on other styles was rarely seen. In addition many teachers only referred to jazz in relation to extra-curricular study, again suggesting that this is where departments concentrated their activities (musically advanced jazz bands existed in two of the focus departments, Rural County and Suburban Street).

Eight respondents based their reasons for gender choice upon extra-curricular premises and made no reference to the classroom whilst half of these also believed boys to be more successful as a result of their preferred instrumental practices:

**School 64:** There are more boys learning instruments associated with jazz...

**School 36:** Perhaps it is boys because more of them play brass, guitar and go to jazz club in this school.

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<sup>50</sup> For further information on women's participation in jazz see amongst others, Kent (1983), Unterbrink (1983), Dahl (1984), Placksin (1985).

**School 42:** Boys are more likely to play jazz orientated instruments.

**School 57:** The jazz pianists and guitarists tend to be boys.

Indeed only four respondents gave feedback on jazz being used successfully in the everyday environment although all agreed that it was equally well-received:

**School 22:** We have found that both boys and girls at whatever level are quite willing to engage in jazz styles – they really enjoy the challenge.

**School 31:** Pupils are usually keener on this in Year 7. At KS4 boys are very good at improvising in this genre though.

However six respondents were adamant that jazz did not go down well in the classroom and therefore they tended to shy away from using it:

**School 21:** It is difficult, as both are unwilling to learn this particular style. It is also completely alien to all of my students.

**School 48:** I haven't come across more than two or three pupils happy to have a go at this type of music.

**School 53:** Only a minority are interested, with equal gender balance.

The nine comments suggesting that either sex was more willing to engage with jazz proffered diverse reasons. Perhaps unsurprisingly, in the light of the over-arching masculine delineation of music (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Green, 1997), boys' success was attributed to the cerebral skill of improvisational flair, whereas girls' concerned bodily accomplishments such as a propensity for singing and dancing:

**School 1:** More boys are willing to attempt solos and improvise...

**School 29:** This is the hardest style to engage pupils with. Girls appreciate the vocal styles more and consequently are more adaptable in terms of receiving it.

**School 44:** As jazz styles include lots of improvisation, boys tend to flourish when it comes to the freedom to work within looser criteria like the blues scale.

**School 73 (Seaside):** I would say that boys are more positive – they seem to have less inhibition about improvising.

**School 74:** Girls seem more comfortable with swing rhythms – possibly as a result of more of them having had dance lessons.

### *9.55 Pupils and Musical Genres*

KS3 students contributed very few remarks (10) indicating that pupils were either accepting of the diverse musical styles upon which the curricula were founded or felt unable to influence change in this area. Notably none emerged from Suburban Street, suggesting that many were reasonably happy with the sorts of musics that they encountered. Its KS3 curriculum revealed a broad use of a variety of popular genres, including those from recent eras rather than older, well-established ones whilst pupils also had the option of choosing their own musical resources on occasions.

Most comments (8) about generic styles came from students in Rural Country, potentially indicating that they had more to complain about. The majority of these (7) were from Year 9 pupils who, although preferring genres that they were currently working in, intimated that they did not enjoy those that they had encountered further down the years, where a dominance of the classical canon had prevailed:

**Sarah (Rural Country/Yr9):** I remember earlier in school all you do is xylophones... now you learn things that you didn't before like... the Caribbean.

**Joe (Rural Country/Yr9):** I like the topic that we're doing at the moment - it's reggae and calypso and very practical... I really don't like classical stuff.

Green (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) suggests that boys generally shun classical music, which they considered slow and 'feminine', preferring to produce fast music in popular styles, involving the manipulation of technology. Further investigation of musical preferences has also revealed that neither sex has any wish to be associated

with listening to classical music (North et al., 2000, Hallam et. al., 2011) although male adolescents in particular express open dislike for its tendency to appear boring and snobbish (Tarrant et al., 2001a)<sup>51</sup>. Several boys from Rural Country also suggested that their behaviour problems were the result of having to engage with such music and expressed a desire for curriculum modernisation and freedom of genre choice (Green 2008, Hallam et al., 2011, D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014):

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Josh:** In the first year we didn't play very much really...

**Mark:** ... we didn't do much in year 7 and 8... like rondo and stuff...

**William:** Now we're playing proper music like reggae...

**Mark:** ... but the music is mainly... well sort of old-fashioned... at least most of it... and they need to modernise it... do some more up to date stuff ... if we worked on modern music that we actually liked playing then we wouldn't mess around so much... (*Chorus of background agreement.*)

**Josh:** Yeah, if we only had the choice of what music to play...

Only two Year 7 pupils admitted to disliking certain musical styles. This student's comment certainly struck a chord with her immediate peers in the interview:

**Rebecca (Rural Country/Yr7):** Oh yeah and I really hate opera... it's just a load of screeching... (*The others laugh and agree vociferously.*)

Meanwhile one boy suggested a dislike of unfamiliar world musics although this view was not commonly expressed across the study:

**Colin (Seaside Town/Yr7):** It's not interesting if you're doing music that you dislike... gamelan... I want to do a variety of different, up-to-date pop music...

Of the 12 KS4 comments about specific genres, all came from GCSE pupils, suggesting that BTEC pupils were allowed to engage in their musical preferences as a basis for their studies (this was certainly evident in the informal observations of pupils working in Seaside Town and Suburban Street). Although most of the GCSE students

<sup>51</sup> For details concerning pupils' comments about classical music in the Musical Futures study see Hallam et al. (2011, pp. 99-101).

were positive about working in popular genres, both sexes seemed far less enamoured with some of the classical and, to a lesser extent, world musics that they encountered as a statutory part of the exam syllabus:

**Simon (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I don't like minimalism at all... it's not interesting to me... and I'd say I didn't like bhangra... I wasn't very good at that... and knowing about the instruments...

**Annabel (Rural Country/GCSE):** I was less happy with all the serialism and classical stuff and they're all so different... and for the exam you've got to learn about all of them... it's quite hard.

**Vanessa (Rural Country/GCSE):** I don't like learning baroque and classical...

Two girls, unlike any boys, despite not enjoying the units involving the classical canon, referred to the study of this genre as a necessary evil; arguing that experiencing the classics was part of a process via which all musics might come to be appreciated. Once again the reification of classical music is exemplified here where it is not only highly respected (if disliked) but also wrongly assumed to provide a foundation upon which the understanding of all other genres is dependent:

**Gabby (Rural Country/GCSE):** Some of the topics I absolutely love like Britpop, I think that's probably my favourite... we've just finished doing African music... that's been interesting... I like different world music...we did a bit of serialism and minimalism at the beginning which I really disliked... they're really unusual and not normal... but I suppose that you have to learn it all really.

**Florence (Rural Country/GCSE):** I don't like the way that there's loads of different genres of music but classical is the main one and a lot of people don't like it... obviously you need to know because it's quite important for history but I just think there should be more... music we know.

A wish to be able to choose the musics that they studied was commonly expressed by both sexes who argued that they needed to be able to relate to them:



**Katherine (Rural Country/GCSE):** I think we all did better on the Britpop section in the mock exam because we were more interested in that sort of music... we need to study those things more.

**Richard (Rural Country/GCSE):** I dislike the fact that some of the course is not very modern... you know the dance unit was really good... and there could be more stuff that's really modern, that everyone could be into... not necessarily heavy metal but... more modern rock, pop... and it would be easier to do because you've heard the music... because it's more relevant... you listen to it... it's on the radio... other things are fun to learn about but it would just make things easier for us really.

This idea is certainly substantiated by outcomes from Musical Futures research (Hallam et al., 2011: 10) suggesting that 45% of interviewed students reported that the adopted pedagogical approaches had helped them to develop a very good understanding of a range of musical genres, including some outside of their own immediate interests (although just 3% indicated a resulting tolerance of classical music).

Two boys (both highly musically motivated) also said that it was a good thing to encounter unknown genres arguing that their views about particular styles had completely changed as a result of having to study them:

**Aiden (Rural Country/GCSE):** I do like the variety because it starts off with Western classical music, and then it has serialism, which none of us had ever heard of before... I like it now... and then it has Indian classical music, and then Britpop and more modern sorts of music that we can relate to.

**Richard: (Rural Country/GCSE)** Well at first we did serialism and I absolutely hated it and I thought that it was just noise and whatever... then I really started getting into it and I listen to it at home now and I'm bringing stuff into my band with it... I've also done an experimental performance in a concert which has been quite a success and want to do another one... I didn't like that sort of music at first but then really got into it.

## 9.6 Summary and Conclusions

This chapter has explored teachers' and pupils' interests and preferences and how these impact upon school music with particular reference to gender. It has examined issues surrounding the construction of musical meaning, pupils' reticence to engage with certain styles and pedagogical problem (emanating from many teachers' musical training) that can alienate certain students. It has also reviewed four key genres (classical, pop, world and jazz) exploring their current position within the music curriculum and their perceived reception according to pupils and teachers in this study. Key outcomes concerning musical identity include that:

- Girls and boys were keen to discuss their own musical preferences. Despite wide-ranging variations there was a greater tendency for boys to prefer loud, aggressive and macho genres whilst girls expressed more varied interests, including ballads and chart pop. This may help explain girls' greater ability to relate to the sorts of classic pop and rock that many teachers are familiar with and consequently utilise in their curricula (Green, 1999b).
- In the focus schools, teachers' musical identities were diverse. Although all had received fairly formal musical training, their subsequent experiences and interests were wide-reaching and had profoundly influenced their KS3 courses in particular, both for better and worse in terms of pupil reception. This was most true for HoDs who were primarily responsible for constructing the KS3 curricula, however the considerable influence of other departmental teachers' pedagogies was not to be under-estimated (despite their abilities to effect change often being constrained by HoDs dictates and limited departmental resources).
- As a consequence it is hypothesised that it is possible for teachers in the same department and following the same curriculum to demonstrate very differently gendered pedagogies according to their experiences, training and interests. The effect of these diverse strategies can also profoundly affect girls' and boys' levels of engagement and likelihood of opting for KS4 music.
- However, many teachers under-estimated the importance and power of their musical identities in directing the content and construction of their curriculum and pedagogy, often believing that their choices, methods and strategies were universal to all music educators.

Key outcomes in terms of the four musical genres included that:

- Teachers' views about their students' engagement with key genres (classical, pop, world and jazz) had changed little since the earlier study (although jazz was not part of L. Green's survey) in that the majority perceived students as responding similarly. The main exception occurred in world musics where noticeably fewer modern-day teachers maintained equity than in 1993.
- Teachers had far more to say about the use of musical genres in the KS3 curriculum than their students, no doubt because they largely controlled the content of everyday lessons. Although the majority agreed that pupils engaged equally well with all styles, some perceptions of gender difference emerged, particularly in terms of the popular styles that boys and girls wanted to use; indeed teachers were in agreement with their pupils' perceptions in this respect.
- Some respondents ascertained that greater numbers of girls were active in notation-based instrumental learning and this caused them to be more accepting of classical music. However girls' liking for this genre was not borne out by female participants in this study.
- Stereo-typical attributes associated with girls, such as open-mindedness and tolerance (Francis and Skelton, 2001), featured in some teachers' assertions that they were more accepting of all musical styles. Boys were often portrayed as inflexible and peer-pressurised into expressing preferences for those musics that reflected dominant forms of masculine-gendered identity such as speed, loudness, strength (of beat) and the use of technological or electronic sources<sup>52</sup>.
- Current teachers' views were least similar to those of 1993 regarding world musics since fewer modern-day teachers maintained gender equity. Indeed a minority asserted that boys were not only more engaged with world musics but better at performing in genres possessing a strong rhythmic basis such as African drumming. The fact that more teachers disseminate these genres via their true oral-aural traditions may be a key factor in *all* pupils' greater success nowadays however boys' greater likelihood of vocalising their enjoyment and approval may cause them to be perceived as more keen and consequently more able.
- Unlike the other key genres, jazz (apart from Blues) did not feature much in teachers' KS3 classroom topics being mostly confined to extra-curricular areas (where it is hypothesised that participants were more likely to be boys, due to

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<sup>52</sup> See footnote 32, page 134 for relevant literature.

their perceived greater enthusiasm for the related instruments and the improvisational practices that they utilised).

- In the focus schools, popular music dominated in lesson observations alongside a little blues and world music. Classical music appeared only once in a listening task, potentially indicating that its use continues to decline (and as suggested by L. Green's second teacher survey (1999b)).
- KS3 pupils had little to say about the music that they experienced in lessons indicating that they were either happy with their current experiences (as likely in Suburban Street) or powerless to change things since the content of the curriculum was imposed rather than being a reflection of their interests (as likely in Rural Country). A few students, mostly boys, expressed a need for musical content of lessons to fully reflect young peoples' current musical interests in order to engage them more successfully. Several boys also criticised the inappropriate ways in which they were forced to study pop music, (Green, 2002a, 2006, 2008, Hallam et al., 2011) with the use of formal notation in its reproduction being particularly disliked.
- Most KS4 students who commented were taking GCSE and, unlike those pursuing BTEC (who had personal control over the musics with which they engaged), were obliged to encounter genres that they did not particularly enjoy. Classical genres were almost universally disliked; a few girls saw their study as being a necessary evil whilst several able boys said that exploring unknown genres opened up new horizons.
- The use of inappropriate pedagogies appeared to heighten pupils' reticence to engage in some genres, especially when formal notation was utilised in the teaching and transmission of those popular and world musics that derive from oral-aural traditions (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). Boys' greater likelihood of openly expressing their dislike of notation is an important consideration here since its use potentially alienates them in larger numbers, a situation that was evident in observations concerning the teaching of gamelan at Rural Country.

## **Chapter 10 : Extra-Curricular Participation and Gender**

This chapter examines the relationship between gender and the ‘extra’ music curriculum that exists in the majority of schools; that is the optional instrumental lessons and music groups that pupils may access above and beyond the classroom. This area has a substantial history of research and therefore current data can be usefully compared and contrasted. At the heart of this issue is the notion that as a child’s awareness of gender grows their instrumental preferences (and the practices relating to them) narrow, according to expectations of gender-appropriateness across the wider society.

### **10.1 Gendered Beliefs and Behaviours Regarding Musical Instruments**

According to cognitive-developmental theory (see section 1.32) children are aware of sex-stereotyping in music by the age of three but do not become motivated to adopt sex-appropriate behaviours until around seven years old (Lamont, 2002). From this age onwards, pupils begin to assign gender suitability to instruments (Abeles & Porter, 1978, Dellzell & Leppla, 1992, Bruce & Kemp, 1993, Harrison & O’Neill, 2000, Hallam et al., 2008) with girls’ preferences gravitating towards the piano, flute and violin, and boys’ to the guitar, drums and trumpet (O’Neill & Boulton, 1996). However some disagreement exists concerning students’ willingness to cross these gendered boundaries. Although a study by Dellzell & Leppla (1992) suggests that girls are more likely to do so (expressing a wish to play masculine-gendered drums, trumpet or saxophone) later research by Abeles (2009) indicates that boys are more inclined (by choosing feminine-gendered violins and clarinets).

Nevertheless, most children appear to display similar prejudices concerning instruments; girls should not play drums and guitars, and boys, flutes (O’Neill & Boulton, 1996). Those who violate boundaries by playing gender-inappropriate instruments also appear far less popular with their classmates than those who conform to stereo-types (O’Neill & Boulton, 1995). Although it appears that prejudices can be inhibited if pupils are subjected to same-sex identification images (regardless of whether the performers are playing gender-consistent or gender-inconsistent instruments (Abeles & Porter, 1978, Bruce & Kemp, 1993)) some evidence also shows that pupils of this age choose to avoid other-sex musicians playing same-sex instrument; girls, who most identify with playing the flute, do not want to listen to it when played

by a man for example (Harrison & O'Neill, 2000).

A British study of over 1000 pupils and their involvement with instrumental tuition whilst transferring from primary to secondary schools suggests that gendered behaviour continues to diverge at this time (O'Neill et al., 2001). By the end of Year 7, 48% of girls in the study were still playing the same instrument as in Year 6, however only 35% of boys were doing likewise. Most notably, there was a huge decline in boys playing trumpet, drums and acoustic guitar although the numbers of girls playing these masculine-gendered instruments hardly fell at all. Paradoxically, of the few primary boys playing traditionally feminine-gendered instruments, most continued at secondary level suggesting that they have successfully overcome earlier peer pressure to conform to sex-stereotyping.

More recent studies indicate that little has changed. Research by Hallam et al. (2008) concerning the provision of music services across 150 English educational authorities suggested that of those learning instruments across all school age groups, 60% were girls, with ratios only being equal at KS1 (ages 5-7). In addition gendered patterns of instrumental choice were generally maintained; the harp, flute, piccolo, voice, oboe and clarinet were most played by girls whilst the electric guitar, bass guitar, drums, tabla and trombone were boys' main choices. After the transition to secondary school, girls' dominance of certain feminine-gendered instruments also increased particularly in string and upper woodwind instruments such as flute clarinet and oboe, already heavily female-orientated at primary school. Meanwhile boys' ascendancy regarding drums and electric guitars was maintained across all ages except at KS4 (age 14-16) when girls' increased participation became evident, potentially reflecting the wish of some to defy conventional gender boundaries during adolescence. These outcomes also resonate with those having emerged from research in the USA and Australia this area (Fortney et al., 1993, Zervoudakes & Tanur, 1994, Harrison, 2009).

The increasing numbers of students engaging with Musical Futures pedagogies in UK classrooms will undoubtedly fuel further change, since numbers learning guitar, drums, keyboard and voice have increased substantially across the three research phases (Hallam et al., 2011: 19) whilst engagement with traditional orchestral instruments has decreased (although there is no a gendered breakdown of this data). Overall extra-curricular learning appears to be in decline however since it was estimated that only 10% of Year 7 students were participating in 2012 (Zeserson et al. 2014).

## 10.2 Instrumental Teachers and their Pupils in this Study

Respondents were asked to supply information in three key areas; the sex of each instrumental teacher, a statement choice best representing the gender balance of pupils taking lessons in each instrument and a further choice best representing the gender balance of those attending each extra-curricular activities.

All schools but one (77) employed varying numbers of peripatetic instrumental staff however sex-stereotyping abounded (according to that identified in section 10.1) since there were few examples of individual teachers crossing traditional boundaries. In terms of female dominated areas; 61% of string teachers, 88% of voice coaches and 64% of woodwind instructors were women. Male domains included brass (77%), percussion (90%), and guitar (94%). Only piano, keyboard and saxophone tuition had fairly equal distributions of male and female tutors.

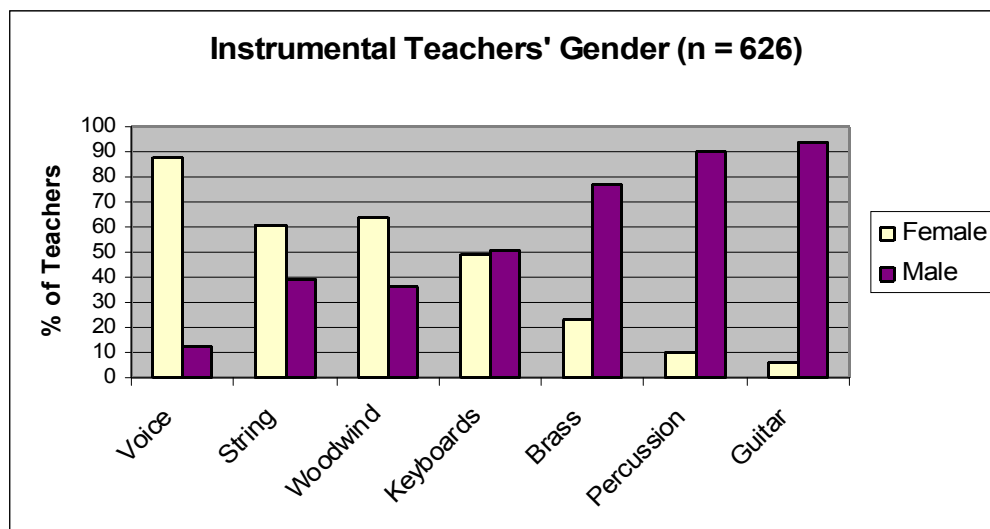


Figure 7: Chart showing breakdown of teachers' gender according to instrumental family

Within most instrumental families there were further anomalies with the premise that the larger and lower the instrument, the more likely it was to be taught by a man; and conversely the smaller and higher, the more likely it was to be taught by a woman (indeed 100% of flute teachers were female and 100% of lower brass teachers were male). Similarly regarding percussion, 99% of drum teachers were men whilst only steel pans tuition had an equal distribution of the sexes. Meanwhile 100% of electric and bass guitar teachers were male although acoustic guitar teaching was better represented by females at around 30% of the total.

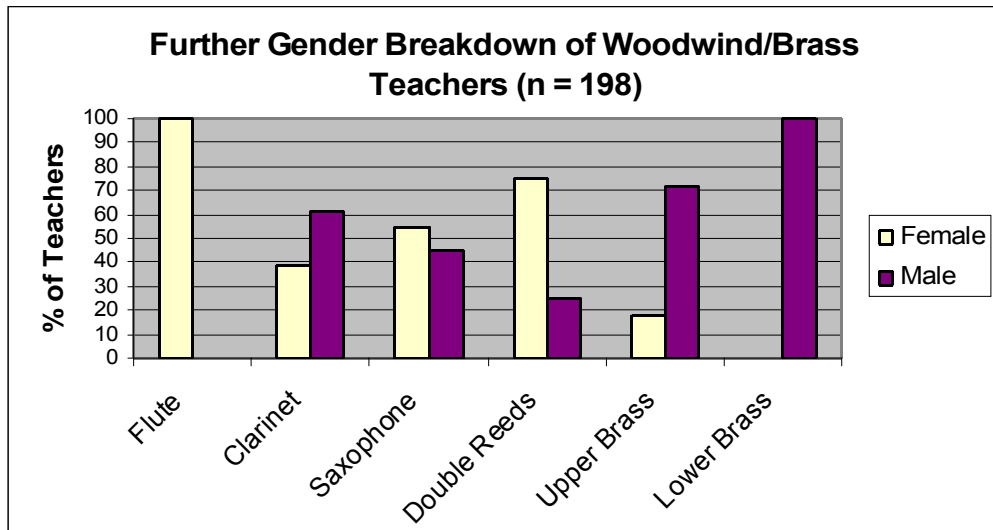


Figure 8: Chart showing breakdown of woodwind and brass teachers according to gender

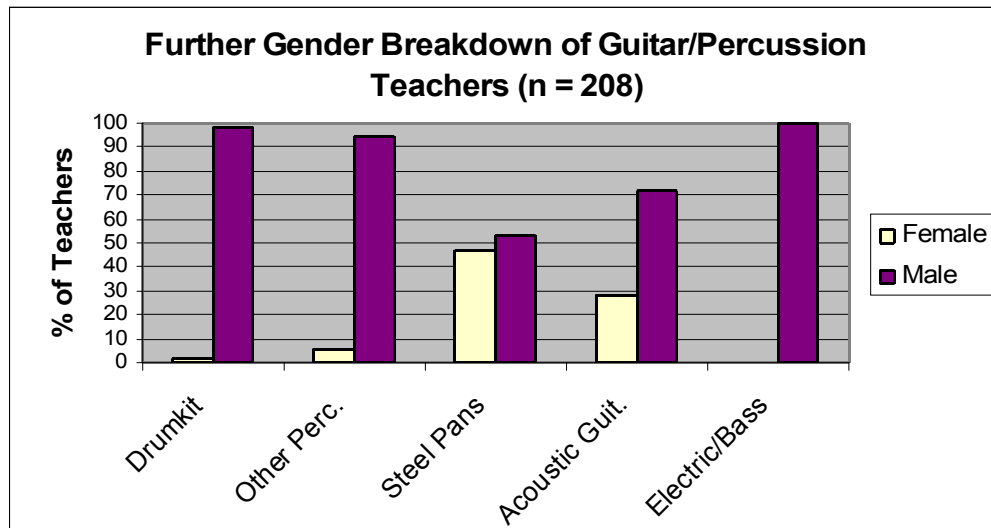


Figure 9: Chart showing breakdown of percussion and guitar teachers according to gender

In addition there was a clear correlation between the dominant sex of the teachers in each instrumental area and that of their pupils. Voice, strings and woodwind were strongly feminine-gendered, with lower woodwind being slightly less so, whilst brass, percussion and electric guitars were firmly masculine-gendered (acoustic guitar being more female friendly however). Only saxophone, piano and keyboard were fairly gender-neutral with a slight leaning towards the feminine. The issue of role modelling is potentially pertinent here; despite no evidence emerging from this study suggesting that the sex of a classroom teacher affected pupils' attainment or enjoyment (and in agreement with much other research (Carrington et al., 2007, 2008, Francis, 2008, Francis et al., 2008 (see section 2.5.1)), same-sex identification appears conspicuous in this data (Abeles & Porter, 1978, Bruce & Kemp, 1993, Harrison & O'Neill, 2000).



Instrument	Many More Boys Learn	Slightly More Boys Learn	Roughly Equal Numbers	Slightly More Girls Learn	Many More Girls Learn
Voice	0	0	3	16	46
Upper Strings	1	3	11	15	29
Lower Strings	0	3	5	10	9
Flute	1	4	3	11	44
Clarinet	0	5	17	17	25
Saxophone(s)	4	8	23	12	13
Oboe/Bassoon	2	7	4	7	8
Trumpet/Horn	28	13	7	7	2
Trombone/Tuba	23	11	2	1	1
Drum Kit	43	22	7	1	1
Other Percussion	6	5	5	0	0
Acoustic Guitar	17	26	23	4	1
Electric/Bass Guitar	33	24	12	0	0
Piano/Keyboard	2	0	40	18	4

Table 10: Showing relationship between instruments taught in schools and gender

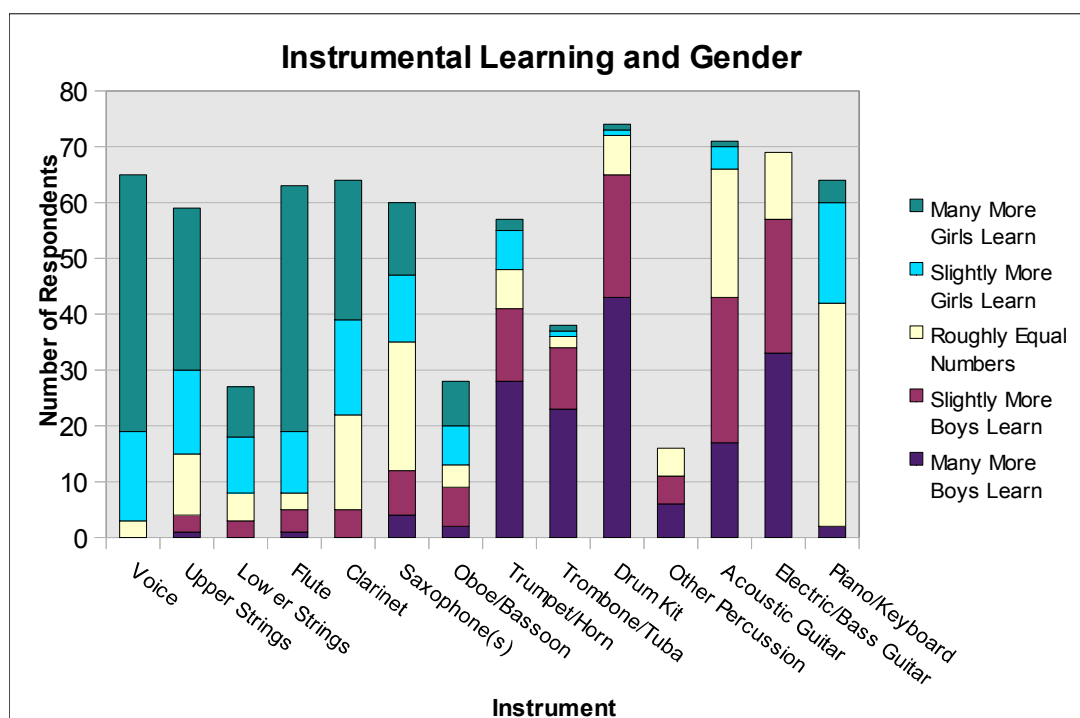


Figure 10: Chart showing relationship between instruments taught in schools and gender

### 10.21 Teachers on Pupils' Instrumental Choices

Teachers contributed 80 comments in this area, mostly regarding pupils and not staff. Of the three respondents who specifically referred to their instrumental teachers, slippage

between the beliefs and departmental data was clearly evident and further demonstrates the power of individual perception to overwhelm that which is observable:

*School 40:* There is no obvious gender bias and we have an equal mix of genders represented amongst our instrumental staff.

However this was not correct since there were twice as many male instrumental teachers in the department whilst women taught violin and woodwind and men brass, guitars, drums and keyboards.

*School 74:* We try to offer a range of instruments to appeal to both sexes... many of the peripatetic staff are male...

Since this department strongly promoted teaching in drums, guitar and keyboard the nature of its peripatetic staff was hardly surprising whilst I hypothesise that the sorts of instruments on offer would appeal to more boys overall.

In contrast, another respondent said that gendered expectations were so entrenched, especially in certain areas, that employing a teacher who crossed the divide made no in-roads in terms of rebalancing pupil participation:

*School 29:* We have tried both male and female singing teachers as role-models but this has had little effect on encouraging boys. (For a review of issues surrounding gender and singing see section 6.4).

In terms of pupil participation, 11 respondents stated that equal numbers of boys and girls were learning overall although only two admitted to gender imbalances in terms of who played what:

*School 69:* We have roughly equal numbers of boys and girls learning but the increase in numbers of pupils (especially boys) learning electric guitar over the past few years has definitely affected our KS4 numbers (in favour of boys).

A further example of slippage was evident in this teachers' statement concerning their perception of gender balance within the department:

**School 1:** Fifteen years ago an instrument would be deemed specifically suited to a boy or a girl - boys would naturally choose a loud instrument e.g. a brass instrument (perhaps something large!) and girls would pick an instrument that was deemed more feminine e.g. a flute or a violin. Now that there are more examples on TV of male and female musicians playing all instruments (and proving that it is OK to do so) children are not so afraid of playing the instrument they want. This has also opened up more avenues for girls and boys to be equally as good as each other.

Despite this assertion, the HoD's perceptions did not align with their actual data since gender-stereotyping abounded; many more boys learnt guitar, drums and brass, and girls, woodwind and strings. The power of globally shared perceptions in affecting and directing personal beliefs is in operation here, skewing this individual's appreciation of the facts as evidenced in their own departmental information.

Only seven respondents indicated that many more girls took up instrumental lessons whilst just one suggested likewise for boys (however this school population was 70% male so this outcome was hardly surprising).

**School 75:** Girls' instrumental take-up is much higher than boys' but those boys who stick at it are as good as any of the girls.

A further eighteen said that girls were more likely to play orchestral or 'classical' instruments whilst seven mentioned girls' greater likelihood of taking singing lessons:

**School 37:** A few boys have vocal coaching but they are much in the minority – more girls have lessons and consequently want them. I don't really know why we've got this situation – it's hard to break the tradition of how it's viewed.

**School 58:** More girls take up the traditional instruments and singing lessons are 100% girls.

**School 63:** ... girls choose woodwind, strings and piano. The girls tend to be more classically trained...

**School 64:** Girls are often drawn to instruments such as the violin or flute.

Meanwhile 29 teachers remarked upon boys' instrumental preferences with 21 suggesting that these were rock-orientated, four jazz-influenced and four in world music domains. Reasons for the popularity of the instruments associated with these genres concerned boys' greater liking for informal practices, dislike of formal notation and exams, alongside a need to be affiliated with masculine or indeed macho musical practices (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997):

**School 16:** ... lots of boys opt for guitar or drums... few take exams in them.

**School 54:** Boys are more likely to play guitar and drums that don't require conventional notation knowledge.

**School 61:** ... boys particularly encourage each other in groups where drum-kit and guitars are not seen as 'sissy' like other instruments.

**School 64:** ... boys want to play popular instruments that they can learn by ear and this means there are also more learning instruments associated with jazz...

Although most teachers said that pupils were equally successful at performing on instruments regardless of their gender, a minority (eight) suggested that girls were liable to achieve higher standards due to their perceived levels of commitment:

**School 8:** Girls are better at organising themselves to practice. Boys usually play rock instruments and stop when they realise that 'rock god' status is only achieved when you practice!

**School 43:** Sometimes peer groups inform girls' choices as in, 'My friend is learning so can I?'

**School 44:** Girls... are slightly more mature as they have the dedication and perseverance.

Nevertheless one interviewee suggested that girls were not averse to external pressure especially if the instrument had aspects that were deemed ‘unfeminine’:

**Ms Flatley (Rural Country):** There’s a girl in Year 7 and she plays the oboe... it will be interesting to see whether she does that in front of her classmates in Year 9... because when you play the oboe your face changes, very dramatically... I used to feel the same... very embarrassed... because it looks really strange and you’re conscious of people watching you.

Post’s assertions (1994: 40) concerning the negative associations surrounding unladylike modes of performance is apparent here; such activities challenge traditional concepts of femininity and become salient as adolescent females become increasingly aware of societal expectations concerning gender-appropriate behaviours (Paechter 2006c).

Reasons supplied by those 11 respondents who referred to boys’ higher standards of performance revolved around two themes; their levels of commitment to certain instruments and their confidence or even brashness, when taking part:

**School 27:** They are more dedicated as far as playing rock instruments are concerned.

**School 73 (Seaside Town):** Most boys, but not all, have huge egos – they want to be better than everybody else at everything, including playing an instrument...

### *10.22 Instrumental Tuition in the Focus Schools*

Instrumental lessons in evidence in the three departments predominantly conformed to aforementioned gendered trends in terms of both teacher and pupil patterning.

#### *10.221 Suburban Street*

There were 150 weekly instrumental lessons taught by 12 peripatetic teachers who mostly met gender expectations in that those teaching string, flute, singing and classical guitar were female whilst those teaching brass, drums and electric guitar were male.

With regards to more gender-neutral instruments, females taught saxophone and steel pans whilst males taught double reeds, clarinet and piano. The gendering of their respective pupils was also in line with expectations; strings, flute, oboe and voice were heavily female orientated, guitar and drum-kit were male dominated whilst clarinet and steel pans had equal numbers learning. Nonetheless brass instruments were only slightly balanced in favour of boys whilst female saxophone players outnumbered boys by a ratio of 2:1 (as flautists were encouraged to take up saxophone this was hardly surprising). Staff awareness of gender imbalances was not always evident either:

***Mr. Hayward (Suburban Street):*** It's pretty evenly balanced overall... including boys doing violin... it's not unusual to see a boy walking through the gates with a violin under his arm.

However in truth this would have been a rare sight since departmental data revealed that only four boys were learning violin across the entire school. This is yet another example of slippage between evidence and individual perceptions since it is most unlikely that the respondent deliberately intended to mislead. His somewhat distorted view not only projected a desire for greater gender equity than existed at present but also a wish that things were clearly changing for the better.

#### *10.222 Rural Country*

There were 12 peripatetic instrumental teachers visiting this department who subscribed to traditional gendered patterning; string, woodwind, voice and keyboard teachers were female whilst brass, guitar and percussion were male. The gendering of respective pupils was also mainly in line with traditional expectations; lower strings, flute, clarinet double reeds and voice were heavily female-orientated, as indeed were saxophone and keyboard, whilst brass, guitar and drums were strongly male dominated. Only upper string numbers defied these norms with a 50-50 split.

#### *10.223 Seaside Town*

As the school had only recently established a substantial musical profile, peripatetic lessons were limited to just a few options (guitar, drums and voice) and were only

available to those studying BTEC music (although notably free of charge). Men taught guitar and drums whilst the vocal coach was a woman. Pupils also conformed to behavioural expectations; only two of the 12 drummers were girls, just two of the 20 singers were boys, and of the 21 guitarists, one third were girls.

### *10.23 Pupils on Instrumental Choices*

Of the 97 KS3 interviewees, 30 indicated that they were currently learning to play an instrument outside of the classroom with an equal distribution between the sexes. Over half were learning formally at Rural Country (16), hardly surprising for a school with middle class demographics (see section 3.413). Nine students were self-taught and notably five of these attended Seaside Town where there were no KS3 instrumental lessons available. In addition, 30 pupils from Year 7 (boys and girls equally) indicated that they had given up an instrument at the change between primary and secondary school high-lighting the problems that surround transition (O’Neill et al., 2001, Hallam et al., 2008, Harrison, 2009, Zeserson et al, 2014). Reasons for stopping included lack of practice time, difficulty of instruments, teacher issues, boredom and waning interest however there was no mention of self-image issues or gender-inappropriateness.

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Number of Boys Currently or Formerly Playing</b>	<b>Number of Girls Currently or Formerly playing</b>
<b>Voice</b>	1	1
<b>Violin</b>	0	6 (3)*
<b>Flute</b>	0	4 (1)*
<b>Clarinet</b>	1	3 (2)*
<b>Recorder</b>	4 (4)*	4 (4)*
<b>Trumpet</b>	3 (1)*	0
<b>Drums</b>	4 (2)*	0
<b>Saxophone</b>	1 (1)*	0
<b>Keyboard/Piano</b>	8 (4)*	10 (4)*
<b>Guitar</b>	5	5 (4)*

**Table 11: Showing numbers of KS3 students having learnt a musical instrument outside of the classroom according to gender (\*numbers in brackets show those having given up).**

Table 11 shows the numbers of KS3 pupils in the study either currently playing, or having formerly played an instrument, and suggests some evidence of the gendering of instrumental practices in action. For example, although equal numbers of girls and boys

had learnt guitar, only females had given up, potentially indicating that this instrument becomes perceived as more masculine-gendered as the adolescent years progress.

Of those formally interviewed at KS3, 24 said that they had never played an instrument, (10 boys and 14 girls) however reasons, such as lack of availability or prohibitive costs, were not identified. Only nine currently expressed a wish to take up something and notably seven were Year 7 boys who wanted to learn drums or guitar. Their preferences denote that rock instruments become increasingly important at adolescence whilst their interest in learning traditional instruments wanes considerably (O'Neill et al., 2001, Hallam et al., 2008, Harrison, 2009, Hallam et al., 2011).

Pupils' statements concerning instrumental gender-appropriateness mostly supported the conservative and traditional viewpoints expressed in previous studies<sup>53</sup>. Of the 33 comments, 26 were from boys potentially indicating their stronger feelings about such issue:

**Luke (Suburban Street9):** I think girls... learn violin and flute... boys sometimes learn guitar and drums...

**Bruce (Seaside Town/Yr7):** ... boys like guitars... pianos... drums...

**Georgina (Rural Country/Yr7):** There are no boys in flute choir 'cos I don't think that boys play the flute...

**Poppy (Rural Country/Yr7):** I think there's quite a few boys who play brass and saxophones...

Some boys even went so far as to label certain instruments (such as drums and guitars) as 'their' instruments:

***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Sam:** ... the girls mostly go for soft instruments and we like to use the drums...

**Reece:** Yeah... and they like the keyboard... we never get out the boys' instruments...

**Sam:** ... drums, guitars and stuff like that... (*Others chorus 'Yeah!'*)

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<sup>53</sup> See footnote 10, page 45 for relevant literature.



**Leroy:** Stuff like bongos... they're for boys... things that you hit...

***Rural Country Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Callum:** Not all things in music are girly though...

**Billy:** Drums aren't girly...

**Steven:** ... and guitars... girls normally play the flute and clarinet and stuff...

The following informal discussion in a Year 9 lesson observation further typifies such prejudices since the participants suggested that boys' instruments were more physically and mentally challenging, thus affirming traditional notions of masculinity (Francis & Skelton, 2001):

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**AG:** Do the girls ever use the amps and guitars and stuff?

**Peter:** Yeah sometimes...

**Andy:** Some of them, but not many.

**Liam:** But generally they don't like to use the amps... they usually use acoustic guitars.

**Brendan:** Yeah they're not manly enough...

**AG:** So you reckon using an amplifier is more manly then?

**Boys chorus together:** Yeah!!!!

**AG:** So if electric instruments aren't for girls what are girls' instrument then?

**Andy:** The instrument he's playing... (*points to Alexander playing a xylophone*)

**AG:** So what else is a girly type of instrument to play?

**Peter:** ... keyboards...

**Andy:** (*One of the keyboard players*) No they're not, they're hard to play!

**Brendan:** (*The other keyboard player*) They're easy to play...

**Andy:** They're for either girls or boys to play...

**Alexander:** I think the flute...

**Michael:** Yeah, definitely...

Only two Year 7 boys seemed more open minded and suggested that girls might like to play their instruments or vice versa although one suggested that such girls were boyish in their demeanour:

**Reece (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Some girls are like tomboys... if you did divide the girls up there would be some that wanted to do boys' stuff... and some boys might want to do keyboards too.

The other found himself battling against the entrenched views of his peers who, although agreeing that tradition had forced girls into certain practices, suggested that this was inevitable due to the sorts of musics with which girls wished to engage:

***Seaside Town Year 7 boys discussion***

**Justin:** ... Boys tend to use guitars... girls triangles... or the flute... technically there is no difference in boys and girls being able to play instruments...

**Henry:** They could be different in that they often play different instruments to us... but that's just sexist... because a boy might want to play a triangle or a flute... there's nothing wrong with that... it's like saying that the violin is a girl's instrument when it's not... look at an orchestra for example... it's not like that... there's probably more girl players than boy players in them nowadays.

**Justin:** It's probably because boys don't want to waste their time...

**Henry:** ... It's not a waste of time!

**AG:** Are you saying that music is a waste of time?

**Justin:** Yeah! Boys should be going out on adventures...

**Henry:** ... but girls can do exactly the same... there is nothing actually set for boys and girls... it's just a matter of sexism.

**Shane:** I don't believe that there's girls' instruments and boys' instruments either... people say this because when they look at an orchestra they see loads of girls playing the violin... that's basically why.

**Colin:** It's because girls are more gentle...

**Shane:** Yeah and boys are rough...

**Henry:** That is so sexist... it's just stereo-typing... like saying pink is for girls and blue is for boys...

**AG:** Well where does this stuff all come from?

**Colin:** It's laid down in history...

**Justin:** But I'm not saying that the violin should be a girls' instrument... it's just that it's more likely to be played by a girl... it's because girls are softer but boys are all about noise...

**Henry:** ... you should be whatever you want...

**Colin:** It's more ladylike for girls to play certain things though...

**AG:** And what might be a ladylike instruments?

**Colin:** Violin, flute...

Once again patriarchal ideas concerning women's suitability for playing certain instruments arise (Post, 1994, Green, 1997) alongside the notion that there are more exciting things for boys to do than passive (and thus feminised) music (Colley et al., 1994, Paechter, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2009, Colley & Comber, 2003b).

Four other Year 7 boys also referred to the balance of men and women performing in public, thus confirming how the largely male 'public' or paid sphere of engagement with music, and the predominantly female 'private' or unpaid sphere (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993, Post, 1994, Green, 1997), continue to affect how musical practices are both perceived and received:

***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Lewis:** When you watch on telly... like orchestras and stuff... there aren't that many ladies...

**Gary:** ... or even on programmes like 'Britain's got Talent'...

**Billy:** There's one girl that plays the drums in the White Stripes...

**Callum:** And a girl in Talking Heads...

At KS4 56 of the 68 students said that they currently played instruments (31 boys and 25 girls) with several indicating that they learnt two or more (see Table 12). Gendered expectations mostly prevailed: orchestral strings and voice were heavily feminine-gendered; brass, electric/double bass, drums and saxophone were exclusively male (with guitar slightly less so); clarinet, flute and piano were fairly equitable. Nevertheless a minority of boys significantly defied trends regarding the flute since, and unlike any girls, three were still learning and performing to extremely high standards. According to Green's notions of musical meaning, these boys' performances were manipulating listeners' perceptions so that the music's inherent qualities subjugated the feminine delineations of the instruments themselves (1997: 227).

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Number of Boys Currently or Formerly Playing</b>	<b>Number of Girls Currently or Formerly playing</b>
<b>Voice</b>	2	25
<b>Violin</b>	0	5 (3)*
<b>Flute</b>	3	3 (3)*
<b>Cello</b>	0	2
<b>Double Bass/Bass Guitar</b>	3	0
<b>Clarinet</b>	3 (2)*	2 (1)*
<b>Trumpet</b>	2	0
<b>Trombone</b>	2	0
<b>Drums</b>	12	2
<b>Saxophone</b>	3 (1)*	0
<b>Keyboard/Piano</b>	6	5 (3)*
<b>Guitar Acoustic/Electric</b>	21	9

**Table 12: Showing numbers of KS4 students having learnt a musical instrument outside of the classroom according to gender (\*numbers in brackets show those having given up).**

There were also perceptible differences in the practices demonstrated by those studying BTEC as opposed to GCSE. Of those taking the technically-orientated BTEC in Suburban Street only six (unlike all of the GCSE students) described themselves as instrumentalists whilst just one of these was currently learning via conventional lessons. In contrast all 27 students taking the performance-led BTEC at Seaside Town described themselves as either instrumentalists or singers. However only two mentioned their perceived standards in relation to the system of the instrumental grade examinations in the UK (as established by the Associated Board of the Royal Schools (ABRSM) or Trinity-Guildhall amongst others). This was in contrast to those from the other two schools where pupils' success was both highly publicised and spoken of as an important measurement of achievement by the instrumentalists themselves.

Of the 30 pupils taking GCSE, 26 chose to talk about their current instrumental skills indicating that this comprised an important aspect of their musical self-identity; 18 were having formal lessons (nine in more than one instrument) and many had reached very high standards having already taken upper grades (6-8). Notably those eight students developing their skills via informal means were all boys who taught themselves drums and guitars in order to perform in bands.

Eleven students (six BTEC and five GCSE) had learnt an instrument earlier in their school careers but now ceased, nevertheless several suggested that they would not

have opted for music without having done so. Indeed only two BTEC pupils from Suburban Street and no GCSE pupils had never played. This supports the argument that the majority of pupils who go on to KS4 music have had access to the 'extra' music curriculum, existing outside of the general classroom (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001). Only in Seaside Town, where the majority had not experienced formal instrumental learning before KS4 options, did students appear to have chosen the subject because they liked it, rather than because of pre-acquired skills.

Just 12 KS4 students commented about instruments and gender (eight boys and four girls). Notably two-thirds came from Seaside Town where the limited number of instruments on offer somewhat exacerbated the gender divide according to their dominant gendering (voice being strongly feminine and drums/guitar masculine).

#### *Seaside Town BTEC boys' discussion*

**Sameer:** Most girls go for singing or perhaps piano... they don't play drums...

**Marcus:** I don't think any girls do... but loads of boys do.

**Ryan:** Yeah I know a few girls that do guitar...

**AG:** And what about singing?

**Ryan:** Absolutely loads and loads...

One boy disputed these stereotypical views however:

**Jason (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I think some girls like singing, drums, guitars...

Meanwhile a girl suggested a more basic reason for boys' lack of formal learning:

**Robyn (Suburban Street/BTEC):** They're probably too lazy to learn an instrument properly...

### **10.3 Gendered Beliefs and Behaviours Regarding Extra-Curricular Participation**

Since the gendering of instrumental choice naturally informs the gendering of musical ensembles it was hardly surprising that vocal, string and woodwind ensembles in the study tended towards being feminine-gendered whilst brass, percussion and rock groups were masculine-orientated. A more equal mix occurred in activities that either drew

from across all instrumental groups or required no formal notational knowledge or prior experience (such as African drumming). This concurs with many of Greens findings (1993, 1996/2010, 1997) along with anecdotal information from Australia (Harrison, 2009) noting that teachers reported roughly equal amount of girls and and boys in orchestras and bands, twice as many girls than boys in string ensembles, and a dominance of girls in choirs (75% or more)<sup>54</sup>.

#### 10.4 Extra-Curricular Participation in this Study

Most schools in the current survey offered various extra-curricular opportunities in which the gendering of instrumental choice had impacted upon the gendering of ensembles. Thus brass and pop/rock groups were strongly male-orientated and string and woodwind, female. Larger scale mixed instrumental groups had either equal an balance (e.g. jazz and wind bands) or a very slight feminine bias (e.g. orchestras).

Extra-Curricular Activity	Many More Boys Take Part	Slightly More Boys Take Part	Equal Numbers Take Part	Slightly More Girls Take Part	Many More Girls Take Part
Choir(s)	0	0	4	14	49
Orchestra(s)	1	0	21	13	5
Jazz Band(s)	2	5	20	3	1
Wind Band(s)	1	2	17	9	2
String Ensembles	1	1	6	11	11
W/W Ensembles	0	0	7	7	8
Brass Ensemble	4	9	7	2	1
Steel Pans	2	3	7	5	2
African Drumming	4	4	11	1	1
Samba Band	4	3	12	1	3
Pop/Rock Groups	23	26	11	1	0
Music Theory	1	2	12	7	4
Music Technology	19	11	9	0	0
Guitar Club	2	0	1	0	0
Keyboard Club	1	0	0	1	0
Bhangra Band	0	1	0	0	0
DJ-ing Club	2	0	0	0	0

Table 13: Showing relationship between extra-curricular activities in schools and gender

<sup>54</sup> In particular see Green (1997, pp. 152-7 and pp. 168-182)

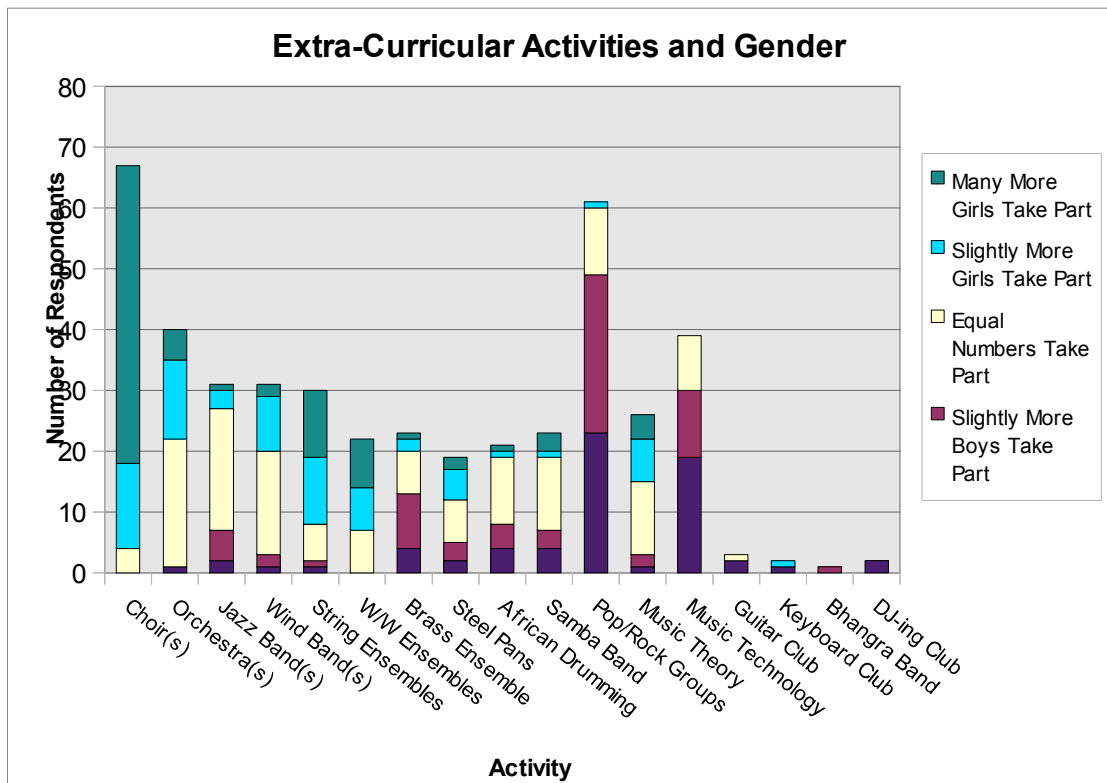


Figure 11: Chart showing relationship between extra-curricular activities in schools and gender

Nevertheless choral singing was completely dominated by girls with most teachers indicating that vocal groups were either totally, or almost, 100% female. Technology clubs were largely populated by boys whilst music theory groups, attended by those taking formal instrumental grades, were neutral as were those involving world music activities. Other groups had too small numbers to comment upon.

#### 10.41 Teachers on Extra-Curricular Participation

Survey respondents made 47 comments about pupil involvement with five suggesting equal participation in all areas:

**School 22:** Both show equal enjoyment and are encouraged to participate...

**School 78:** We offer a wide range of instrumental lessons and extra-curricular that appeals to both boys and girls.

However at issue here is perhaps not the overall balance of boys' and girls' involvement but the wide variations seen within activities: in three of these departments certain proceedings were extremely gendered in favour of one or other. Meanwhile two of these HoDs were mistaken in their perceptions since closer inspection of their data revealed extra-curricular activities to be attended by greater numbers of girls.

The most striking extremes in participation were cited by those 23 respondents referring to vocal groups and choirs (for potential reasons see section 6.4):

*School 31:* Choir attracts three times as many girls (despite this school's population being two-thirds boys).

*School 53:* There are mostly girls in the choir, fewer than 5% are boys.

*School 58:* The choir is 100% girls...

*School 72:* Older boys generally feel that choir is for girls and that it will ruin their image however we do have a few Year 7 boys in our choir.

*School 74:* Generally there are few, if any, boys who voluntarily take part in singing solo or in ensembles.

Four respondents also mentioned musical genre as notably affecting boys' participation:

*School 4 (Suburban Street):* We've had a successful all-male barber shop group in recent years...

*School 21:* Vocal ensembles are almost exclusively female but we have a gospel choir where most pupils of African descent get involved, both boys and girls.

*School 29:* Musicals have been very motivating for both sexes...

*School 37:* Boys don't tend to get involved in choir. but a few years ago I managed to get about 50/50 through doing Bohemian Rhapsody but afterwards, as soon as we went on to something else, they all left again!



Some also noticed the changes that gradually occurred towards singing as the secondary years progressed:

**School 26:** We have equal numbers in the Year 7 choir and all Year 7/8 pupils perform in a musical. Singing becomes predominantly female by Year 9...

**School 30:** ... as they get older some boys start to sing in bands and musicals.

**School 77:** By the time male students reach Year 11 and have taken courses such as GCSE music and BTEC performing arts they are usually happier about singing in front of people.

Others said that only those boys who were particularly talented were liable to stick at vocal activities, quickly becoming in demand as soloists:

**School 12:** We have very few boys who sing... but we have a few who are good soloists and take leads in school productions although our vocal ensembles are almost exclusively female.

**School 18:** ... the boys who do sing in choir are strong and confident.

A further two respondents had attempted to improve the situation by working with girls and boys separately, however they did not indicate the outcomes of this strategy:

**School 61:** Thirty years ago I ran separate junior boys and girls choirs to counteract this issue!

**School 70:** Girls prefer choirs but we run a boys' choir to address the problem...

In terms of strongly male-gendered activities, eight teachers cited boys' preferences for working in popular genres (for potential reasons see section 6.1):

**School 63:** Our rock bands tend to be predominated by males and these students tend to do this as extra-curricular work.

However there were more mixed views expressed in the 10 comments concerning whether bands and orchestras were equally balanced or more female gendered with some citing wide variations from year to year according to raw ability:

***School 4 (Suburban Street):*** If you look at the orchestra-band it's two-thirds male but in the dance band it varies... last year the only strong ones were girls...

***School 6:*** In our 35 piece jazz band there is an even spread of abilities, ages and boys/girls but it does vary...

#### *10.42 Extra-Curricular Participation in the Focus Schools*

The gender balance of extra-curricular activities supplied by the three departments mostly followed expected trends with the odd exception.

##### *10.421 Suburban Street*

Extra-curricular provision in the department was deemed exceptional by Ofsted and this was exemplified by the existence of a highly accomplished dance band that had approximately equal numbers of girls and boys, although females (mostly flautists too) dominated saxophone and keys and males, brass and percussion. Other ensembles met with gendered expectations; brass and clarinet groups appeared equally balanced, whilst saxophone was slightly feminine-gendered, and the flute ensemble and choir were almost exclusively female. The large scale wind band and orchestra were evenly balanced (although which sex dominated which instruments was not ascertained since they were not observed). I did not witness any rock bands rehearsing, although I was told by the HoD that they exclusively comprised of boys.

##### *10.422 Seaside Town*

The arrangement of the school day (students studied until 5pm whilst lunch breaks for each year group were staggered) meant that no cross year extra-curricular activities were possible. Although enrichment sessions were available for all pupils as part of timetabled options, these were cohort specific and limited in scope due to the restraints

upon available teachers, rooms and facilities. As a consequence the activities mainly consisted of choirs for various KS3 years which were described as being ‘girl-heavy’.

#### *10.423 Rural Country*

Overall there were high levels of participation in some long-established extra-curricular groups. Girls and boys were equally represented in the school orchestra although upper and double reeds were exclusively female and horns and trombones, male. The substantial body of strings was mixed-sex however the percussion section was predominantly male. There was also a wind band (with an equal gender balance), a lower school choir that was almost totally female alongside various smaller groups such as brass and string quartets of varying gender compositions. Although rock bands rehearsed at school they appeared to organise themselves informally and all those seen during observations were comprised of boys.

#### *10.43 Pupils on Extra-Curricular Participation*

Considering the amount of children learning instruments and the possibilities for those with non-formal skills to attend many music clubs, it was surprising to discover that only 13 of the 124 KS3 pupils (six boys and seven girls) currently participated in any musical extra-curricular activities. A further nine said that they had once done so but had now given up. The majority of those still attending were also having formal instrumental or vocal tuition and typically, they participated in choirs, keyboard clubs or instrument-specific ensembles.

In Year 9, only two musically able boys (from Suburban Street) took part, participating not only in school groups but also in local authority ensembles. This gives support to the notion that by the close of KS3 there is a powerful division between those considering themselves musicians (and fully engaged in extra-curricular possibilities) and those labelling themselves non-musicians (who no longer attend any activities, even at a purely recreational level (Bray, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002)).

**Darren (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I’ve joined youth orchestra in the borough...

**Nat (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I’ve also played with hundreds of bands... at the

borough music centre and also at this school. I'm also on one of those schemes which only a few people have got into... and I'm playing with the LSO now... we're doing a concert very soon...

Perhaps even more surprisingly (considering how many were currently playing instruments and the fact that they had opted for music), only 15 of the 68 KS4 students (nine boys and six girls) were currently involved in formal extra-curricular activities. One might hypothesise therefore that memberships of such groups is no longer an indicator of status to pupils of this age. Notably, five were from Suburban Street and all were male GCSE students; indeed not one BTEC pupil of either sex from this school indicated that they were involved in any activities. One suggested that belonging to music clubs was exclusively for GCSE students who were part of the departmental 'in-group':

**Patrick (Suburban Street/BTEC):** Well the people who choose GCSE all play instruments so they're all in bands and stuff like that... they sort of know each other more 'cos they're always playing together... they're a bit of a clique... nobody in BTEC does music outside of class... so it's different.

This view certainly resonates with the research suggesting that pupils' perceptions of musicianship can be skewed by the presence of high standard performing musical groups within departments (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002, O' Neill, 2002). However as evidenced by the small number GCSE pupils participating, their actual membership of extra-curricular groups was far lower than those suggested by the Suburban Street BTEC students.

Four other KS4 students, three of whom were female, said that they were more happy to be involved in activities outside of formal education, such as attending weekend stage schools. This indicates the importance for some of maintaining private musical identities, away from the scrutiny of immediate peer groups (Green, 1997, Dibben 2002, Lamont 2002, O'Neill 2002, Tarrant, North & Hargreaves 2002). Meanwhile some boys, all from Rural Country, mentioned that although they never attended formal activities, they used the department as a free rehearsal space for informal rock band rehearsals.

Those girls who mentioned having given up activities during KS3, cited reasons such as a preference for clashing sports clubs, an inability to meet the group's expectations, boredom and most notably embarrassment. This suggests that, as for boys, some level of peer pressure exists for them too. Choirs seemed to have been mostly attended by girls, particularly those who did not engage with music in a formal way, but the majority insisted they had given up by the end of Year 8:

### ***Suburban Street Year 7 girls discussion***

**Sophie:** Sometimes I used to go to keyboard club... but I'm more into my sports and it clashed... and I used to go to choir... but I found it boring... I found my primary school one quite boring too.

**Mercy:** I used to do choir too... I went for about a month and then I just quit.

Several boys said that they would never have considered attending a music club showing greater preference for sports activities (Koza, 1994, Paechter, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Harrison, 2007) whilst also directly criticising how music clubs were run. This mainly concerned choir which was labelled as 'girly' not only in terms of content but also regarding the feminine styles in which members were expected to sing, and which could lead to homosexual accusations against boy members (from both sexes) (Koza, 1994). Notably the majority of these comments came from Suburban Street in which a more macho culture was evident:

### ***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**Ben:** I only know one boy who goes to a club... he goes to choir...

**AG:** So what do you other boys think about him doing that?

**Gary:** Well I mostly came to the school for sport and stuff like that so it's just a bit... well odd... but it's up to him...

**Lewis:** Yeah and boys are better at sport than music (*they all laugh*)...

**Gary:** Music's not cool 'cos in this school to be cool is to be sporty... and to do what everyone else does...

**Gary:** It's the way that they do it... it's a bit girly...

**Lewis:** I don't really like choir because people say like you're gay and all that... I know you can sing stuff like rock and people won't call you that... but in choir they make you sing hymns... (*They all start to imitate choirboys.*)

**Jake:** Choir tries to introduce new songs to get people interested... like pop...

**Gary:** ... It's always the same songs...

**Jake:** No, it's not the same songs... they're introducing pop and all that... but they shouldn't be sung like that...

**Ben:** Sometimes people might pick on you... and girls have a dig at you too... 'cos all the girls call you choirboy and stuff like that... which also basically means that they're saying you're gay...

With the level of homophobia about choral singing demonstrated here, it is hardly surprising to find that the few boys who were currently (or had recently been) involved in vocal activities engaged in them in personal arenas, outside of school. Although they did not specifically mention it, this no doubt reduced the likelihood of homophobic bullying (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Skelton et al., 2007, Paechter, 2012):

**Jacob (Seaside Town):** I used to do some stuff outside of school... I'd go down to a club every Saturday evening... and hang out with mates... and sing a bit...

**Elliot (Seaside Town):** Well I used to go to a club that was drama and singing and we'd put on little shows in front of parents and friends...

## 10.5 Summary and Conclusion

This chapter has drawn together information concerning the relationship between gender and the 'extra' music curriculum exploring in particular, formal instrumental tuition and extra-curricular participation. Data have been reviewed in the light of outcomes emanating from a plethora of previous studies about children, young people and instrumental engagement. Most strikingly it appears that little has changed in terms of the ways that pupils are willing to partake despite some teachers' (but notably *not* pupils') perceptions to the contrary; the majority of instruments continue to have strongly gendered influences and as a consequence pupils' participation in activities connected with them retains parallel conformities and restraints according to historical notions of gender-appropriateness. Outcomes concerning instrumental choices and extra-curricular participation revealed that:

- The gender of the majority of instrumental teachers in the surveyed and visited departments adhered to traditional patterning concerning gender and instruments despite several respondents asserting the contrary. Pupil participation likewise followed highly gendered traditions in the main.
- Although gendered role-modelling does not seem to be an issue in the mainstream classroom (see section 2.51) it does seem to have some effect upon secondary pupils' willingness to play particular instruments according to their perceived gender-appropriateness. This suggests that historical constructs regarding patterns of behaviour in performing remain extremely powerful, being strongly perpetuated by the actual sex of the majority of instrumental teachers in schools (which mostly uphold conventional roles).
- Just a handful of HoDs admitted to the problems that this created in terms of students perpetuating these practices. Despite some expressing a wish to effect change by breaking this patterning, their ability to employ teachers who crossed gender boundaries was clearly constrained by a lack of availability.
- Slippage occurred between some teachers' beliefs and the evidence supplied by their data since they were certain that equal numbers of boys and girls took instrumental lessons and were involved in extra-curricular activities. Although this was often true regarding overall totals, respondents often failed to break down the data in order to discover gender imbalances (some often excessive) regarding who did what, when and why.
- Teachers were best able to identify extremes of gendered participation occurring in singing activities, declaring their choirs and vocal tuition to be mostly populated by girls. Similarly many were mindful of how many boys dominated the learning of rock instruments and the formation of bands. However most appeared unaware of the true gender balances occurring in the learning of a wide variety of orchestral instruments or how these impacted upon musical ensembles.
- In contrast, many pupils understood that the majority of instruments and their related group practices were highly gendered; some even indicated that certain instruments were inappropriate for them to play or said that they had given up learning because of feelings of the gender-inappropriateness of their earlier choices (O'Neill & Boulton, 1995, 1996, Harrison & O'Neill, 2000). Only those achieving very high standards of performance seemed able to rise above this

situation, moving into performance realms beyond those applying to the bulk of the school population (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). These small numbers of pupils also became the main body of extra-curricular participants in Rural Country and Suburban Street, particularly after Year 7 when there appeared to be a parting of the ways between those considered 'real' musicians and those who had previously dabbled but no longer felt able to engage (Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002, O' Neill, 2002).

- Pupils indicated that negative peer group pressure became more prevalent as the secondary years progressed; as a result many gave up their instrumental lessons or attending school-based clubs altogether (O'Neill et al., 2001, Hallam et al., 2008, Harrison, 2009), whilst others resorted to engaging in musical activities privately, away from school. Boys in particular said that it was no longer considered fashionable to get involved in most music activities at secondary level (thus many gave up at the transition from primary) whilst sporting activities were deemed far more appropriate (Koza, 1994, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Paechter, 2000, Harrison, 2007, 2009). To some extent this pattern seemed true for girls too although their withdrawal appeared to happen a little later; many who initially engaged in activities in Year 7 were no longer participating by Year 8. However, unlike boys, girls also cited boredom, laziness or the greater importance of other interests as fuelling their disengagement.
- Boys openly spoke of their fear of homosexual taunts if participating in aspects of the music curriculum that were widely perceived as feminine-gendered (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Skelton et al., 2007, Paechter, 2012), especially vocal activities. It was notable that all but one of the handful of boy singers interviewed in the focus schools, were participating in outside arenas. Although singing lessons were almost exclusively popular with girls and many also wished to sing in ensemble activities upon arrival at secondary school, as noted above, there was a tailing off of their participation in vocal activities after Year 8, particularly amongst those who were not involved in instrumental tuition.



## **Chapter 11: KS4 Examinations in Music and Gender**

This chapter explores KS4 examination courses with a specific focus upon the part that gender plays in pupils' option choices. As described in section 1.1, despite music being a mandatory part of the National Curriculum, the numbers of males and females opting to study it after the age of 14 remain small. Meanwhile the gender balance currently favours boys whilst girls maintain the tradition of receiving higher than average grades at both GCSE and BTEC (DfE, 2013, Edexcel, 2013). Two key issues are thus examined: firstly, whether, and if so how, gender plays a part in influencing and directing student choices at the age of 14, both in favour or against studying KS4 music; and secondly, how the contrasting curricula contents and pedagogical possibilities of GCSE and BTEC affect the gender balance and grade outcomes of those studying them.

### **11.1 Gendered Traditions in Examination Music**

During the 1950s, 60s and 70s, only a small number of highly trained and academic children studied music after the age of 14 at GCE (General Certificate of Education) 'O' (Ordinary) level although others continued to take external instrumental graded exams (Cox, 2002). Despite the introduction of the Certificate of Secondary Education (CSE) in 1964, providing performance opportunities and aural competence for the less academically orientated (Pitts, 2000), music education remained remarkably elitist and hierarchical. Examinations were based on the study of classical music whether practically, aurally or analytically (except the Mode 3 versions of the CSE which had greater flexibility) and most importantly, 'specialist instrumental tuition was necessary in order to reach required standards' (Green, 2002a: 136). As a consequence, music at examination level was gendered in favour of girls, who were also more likely to study instruments via the notation-orientated classical canon in greater numbers<sup>55</sup>.

Despite its more altruistic and equitable aims, the introduction of the GCSE in the mid-1980s (DES, 1986, QCA, 2007) did not radically improve pupil up-take. Indeed research by Colley, Comber & Hargreaves (1994) concerning the preferential ranking of nine school subjects by 93 secondary pupils (aged 11-13) found that boys placed music in the bottom position whilst girls rated it as lowly as seventh.

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<sup>55</sup> See ABRSM (1994), Bray (2000), Hallam (1998), Hallam & Prince (2000), O'Neill et al. (2001) and Hallam et al. (2008).

Coll (2007) provides reasons for this, identifying three distinct groups as being most unlikely to opt for music at KS4; those who had low self-perceptions in music, those who played instruments but mistakenly believed that their standards were not high enough, and those who had high levels of musical skills but considered other subjects as more valuable to future educational and career choices or easier in terms of achieving higher grades.

Although Coll makes no specific references to gender it is posited that many boys have traditionally belonged to these groups due to their greater likelihood of viewing music as unimportant (Colley et al., 1994, Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001) and irrelevant to future career prospects (Crowther & Durkin, 1982, Miller, 1996, Wright, 2001, Younger et al., 2005) alongside their preferences for informal methods of instrumental learning that were not given academic value in schools until fairly recently (Green, 2002a, 2006, 2008). However outcomes from the Musical Futures study suggest that some students learning music via informal pedagogies still reject it at KS4 because they do not believe themselves to possess the required instrumental or vocal standards (Hallam et al., 2011). This gives weight to the widely-held perception that the possession of formal skills continues to be essential when studying music at this level.

Reasons why pupils choose the subject appear diverse. Research by Evans et al. (2013) concerning all arts GCSE courses found that pupils had both extrinsic or external motives for opting (such as being good at music due to extra-curricular participation that consequently made the subject appear less arduous) and intrinsic or internal intentions (such as wanting to achieve personal goals by studying it). Most importantly they noted that girls were more likely to agree that taking an arts GCSE helped them with self-expression, and in accordance with research suggesting that females are more likely to attach emotions to their musical products (Green, 1997).

Other studies show that many KS3 students view GCSE music as a highly specialist subject, aimed at those already exhibiting considerable instrumental skills or advanced knowledge (gained through extra-curricular learning), and who wish to pursue a future career in the professional world (Lamont et al., 2003, Lamont & Maton, 2008, 2010). However these same KS3 pupils do not consider parallel qualities to be necessary for the study of Mathematics, Science, English and History at GCSE (Lamont & Maton, 2008, 2010). Meanwhile the existence of departmental bands, orchestras, and choirs furthers such perceptions of elitism, however unintentionally (Bray, 2000, Lamont, 2002) causing those pupils whose experiences are limited to the classroom, to

perceive GCSE music as being focused upon performance skills (when in reality this discipline only commands around a third of awarded marks).

During its early years, GCSE required candidates to provide musical scores for both performance and composition submissions whilst also demonstrating the ability to use formal notation when answering listening & writing questions and in the detailed analysis of set works (QCA, 2007). Such demands ensured that girls, with their increased likelihood of benefiting from participation in external musical studies (thus gaining knowledge of musical notation, terminology and history)<sup>56</sup> were likely to achieve greater success. However, Kwami reminds us that, ‘Musical literacy does not only mean the ability to operate according to the canons of the Western traditions’ (2001b: 219) and examination boards have gradually become more accepting of oral-aural musical traditions of late (QCA 2007).

Indeed the GCSE has become increasingly friendly to pupils emerging through non-traditional routes such as those possessing self-taught rock instrumental skills (Pitts, 2000: 181) or technological leanings, who in turn are more likely to be boys. The flexibility that technology engenders, in terms of individualised programmes of study and encouragement of independent learning, has positively played to such boys’ musical strengths (Wright, 2001: 290) whilst the automatic notation of compositional scores has over-ridden the need for pupils to concern themselves with the finer points of conventional musical literacy.

In addition, the growing possibility for pupils to pursue BTEC as an alternative has created further shifts in the music population at examination level, causing numbers taking GCSE to recede accordingly (see Table 2). BTEC has a strong vocational focus, providing learners with, ‘the knowledge understanding and skills necessary for employment in what is commonly termed the music industry’ (Haughton & Spruce, 2007: 68) via an exploration of the world of popular and technological musics. Most importantly the course not only caters for performers, composers and DJs but those who have limited practical skills and who wish to focus upon related music-industry skills such as marketing, recording and presenting music. Teachers are also free to tailor the course to suit individual needs, thus giving greater access to a wider pupil-profile and in particular those who would never have considered taking GCSE.

Since it appears that boys are more likely to think instrumentally in terms of the immediate usefulness of knowledge and acquired skills and how these might lead on to

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

future qualifications (Miller, 1996, Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001), BTEC has much potential; especially to attract those who believe that examination music is only tenable if it leads to suitable employment (Crowther & Durkin, 1982). Indeed in the past, many boys appear to have viewed the option of GCSE music as a frivolous or wasted choice (Wright, 2001) since its career benefits were not immediately obvious<sup>57</sup>. However BTEC course content helps to counteract this notion that the arts, including music, are not only unimportant but ‘soft’, lacking in rigour and seriousness (Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001) and even ‘sissy’ (Harrison, 2009).

Finally, the effect of the Musical Futures pedagogies upon examination options should not be underestimated. The longitudinal study assessing its outcomes revealed that at phase 1 of the research, 32% indicated that they had chosen or would choose music as an option in Year 10, with a further 34% suggesting that they would carry on with music but not for examination purposes (Hallam et al., 2011: 22). At phase 2 (one year later) there was an increase in numbers wishing to choose music in Year 10 but a decrease in those continuing with it outside of school lessons. Most notably, and due to its relevance for this study, boys were more likely to have made the decision to opt for music than girls (Hallam et al., 2011: 129-30). Regardless of gender, take-up of examination music amongst students having experienced this programme was so high in some schools involved in the study, that selection procedures had been introduced for entry to KS4 courses. Meanwhile results were also deemed, ‘impressive and higher than the national average, with substantial improvements in schools where the students had experienced Musical Futures in Years 8 and 9’ (Hallam et al., 2011: 11)<sup>58</sup>.

## **11.2 Music at KS4 in this Study**

Of the 78 schools questioned in the survey; 49 ran a single KS4 music-based course, 26 offered two, two departments provided three and one did not indicate. GCSE and BTEC music predominated although several schools ran Expressive/Performing Arts GCSE or BTEC in addition to, or instead of, a music course. The NCFE music technology course was also offered by two schools<sup>59</sup>. Two departments (one providing only GCSE and the

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<sup>57</sup> Numerous boys perceive sporting activities as intrinsically valuable even though they will not necessarily lead to gainful employment (See Koza (1994), Paechter (2000), Harrison (2007)).

<sup>58</sup> For example the average number of students achieving A\*-C GCSE grades from four of the six case study schools was just over 90% across a four year period (up until 2011), whilst the 2011 BTEC results of the three schools in which it operated, were 100% in two and 89% in the other.

<sup>59</sup> The NCFE (the Northern Advisory Council for Further Education but no longer used as an acronym).

other both GCSE and BTEC) did not formally timetable their classes but held them as after school extra-curricular sessions.

Regarding gender, respondents were asked to specify exact numbers of boys and girls taking GCSE and BTEC (but not other music-related courses since numbers were too small to make constructive comparisons). All but five schools provided details:

**GCSE Music**            **Boys:** 1079 = 57%    **Girls:** 805 = 43%  
**BTEC Music**            **Boys:** 564 = 56%     **Girls:** 441 = 44%

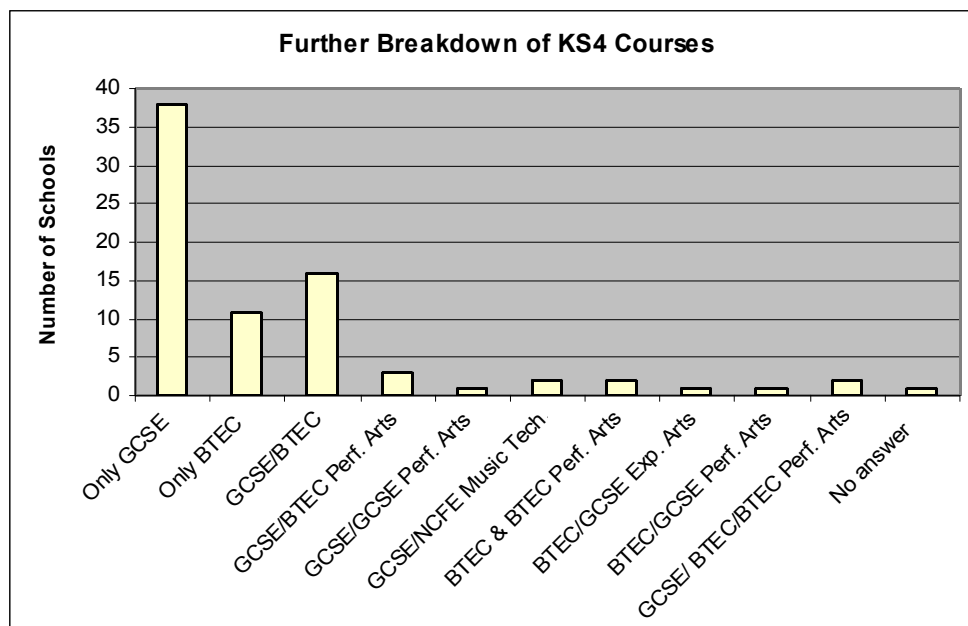


Figure 12: Chart showing KS4 music courses available across all schools in study

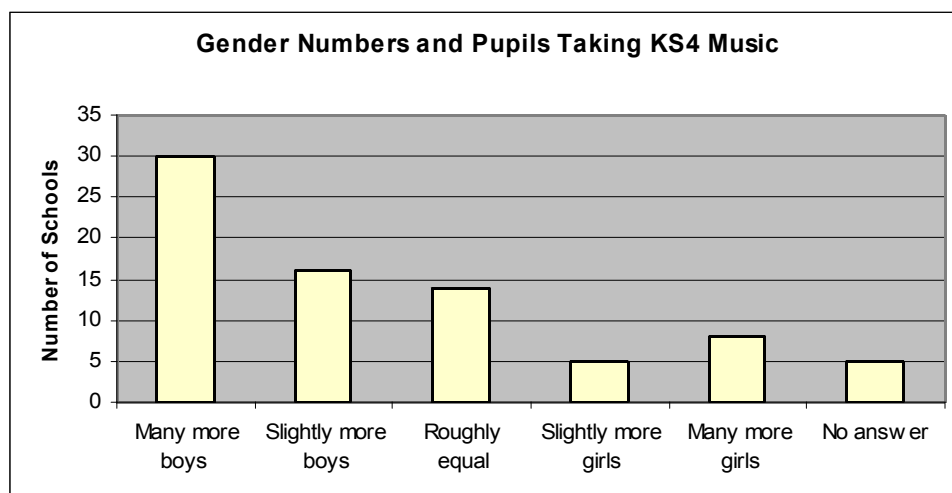
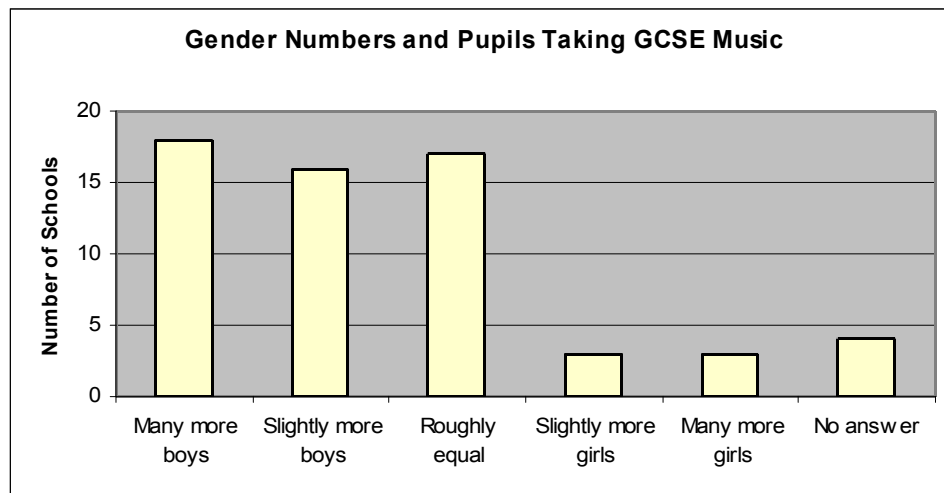


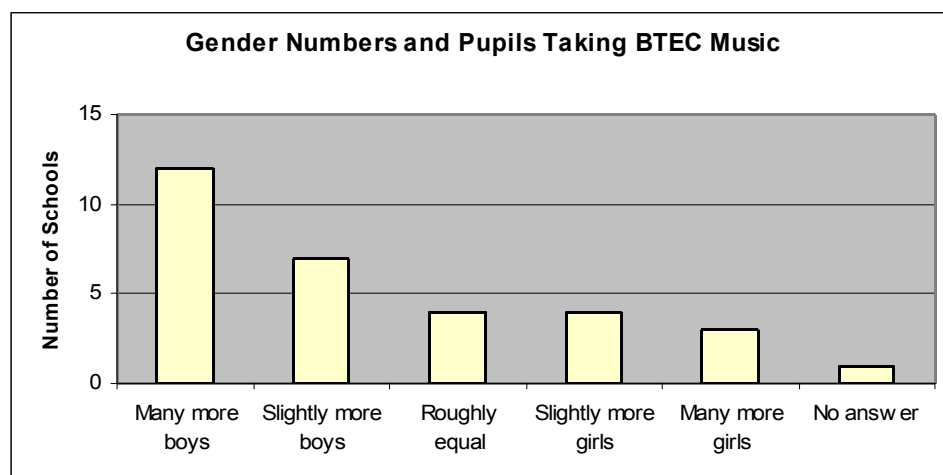
Figure 13: Chart showing balance of gender at KS4 across all schools in study

This creates a ratio of approximately 11: 9 for both KS4 courses across all 78 schools although there were enormous gender variations between individual departments. The GCSE outcome is slightly more biased (in favour of males) than the latest national figures concerning GCSE entries (DCFS, 2013) which indicated that 52% of boys, as opposed to 48% of girls, took the examination. BTEC outcomes are also notably less masculine-gendered than the most recently published figures suggesting that 61% of the national population were boys and 39% girls (Edexcel, 2013).



**Fig. 14: Chart showing balance of gender at GCSE across all schools in study\***

\*It is important to note that this chart is somewhat skewed in that eight schools in the 'Many more boys' category and two schools in the 'Slightly more boys' category were those with populations of 60%+ boys.



**Figure 15: Chart showing balance of gender at BTEC across all schools in study\***

\*Again it is important to note several factors that have also skewed this chart. Firstly, five schools in the 'Many more boys' category and two in the 'Slightly more boys' category had populations of 60%+ boys. Secondly, three out of four schools in the 'Slightly more girls' category had populations of 60%+ girls. Finally, two of the three schools in the 'Many more girls' category and one in the 'Slightly more girls' category did not offer GCSE.

### *11.21 Teachers on KS4 Music*

Although respondents in the survey were not specifically asked to provide reasons for their pupils' KS4 choices, 20 comments emerged from the data with 15 mentioning gender in relation to examination decisions. Most referred to boys' and girls' superiority in specific areas of KS4 courses and therefore they are to be found in Chapters 6-9 concerning musical activities and genres. However four teachers remarked upon general trends in their departments that had led to boys dominating KS4 courses:

***School 4 (Suburban Street):*** BTEC is the more technical qualification which has attracted boys in particular and has now widened considerably the appeal of the subject.

***School 30:*** At KS4 boys overwhelmingly dominate as so few girls choose to compose via the GCSE course (preferring to take BTEC Performing Arts which was offered in this school).

***School 55:*** Over the years I have noticed a steady increase in the numbers of boys both taking music at GCSE and continuing music at 'A' level. Many of these boys do not have a 'classical' background however more of the girls who opt for both courses do.

***School 69:*** The trend towards having more boys at KS4 has only been more evident in the last two years since previously numbers were far more balanced. The increase in numbers of pupils, particularly boys, learning electric guitar over the past few years has definitely affected out KS4 numbers. (Note that this teacher had been the HoD for 13 years in this school.)

These comments resonate with those expressed by teachers interviewed for the Musical Futures study (Hallam et al., 2011) where many believed that BTEC followed on seamlessly from the pupils' KS3 experiences, unlike GCSE. The gendered implications of informal pedagogies and their effect upon KS4 take-up were also noted in that study as revealed by this participant:

We're boy heavy. Part of me embraces that because we know boys are failing and we know in a sense they're the ones that need to be supported. But I would hate if Musical Futures was something that turned girls off music. I think that's something that needs to be looked at or that may happen (Hallam et al.: 2011: 61).

### *11.22 KS4 Music in the Focus Schools*

Departments had very different profiles in terms of courses on offer; Suburban Street delivered both GCSE and BTEC, Seaside Town only BTEC and Rural Country only GCSE. Since very different KS3 curricula and pedagogical strategies were also in operation in these departments, it was hypothesised that the profiles of the respective pupils opting would be radically different. Those with formal musical skills may have found greater affinity with the subject at Rural Country where notation was at the heart of the KS3 curriculum, a situation that potentially favoured more girls according to their recognised attributes (see section 2.3). At Seaside Town, where there were no extra-curricular opportunities, it was hypothesised that KS4 music would attract a wide range of pupils of both sex with varying interests and primarily classroom experiences. In Suburban Street, where both courses were offered and performing arts places were awarded, one might have expected highly trained instrumentalists (who were more likely to be girls) to choose GCSE whilst those without specialist skills gained outside of the classroom, or preferring technological music-making (and more likely to be boys), were deemed likely to be attracted towards BTEC.

Due to the small numbers opting for music overall it can be difficult to make useful judgements concerning trends when looking at data from the most recent academic year alone. Therefore departmental numbers and results from across five years for GCSE, and three for the more recently established BTEC, have been considered, in order to allow for stable averages to emerge from naturally occurring fluctuations.

#### *11.221 Suburban Street*

GCSE, group sizes fluctuated from 4% to 15% of the respective cohort populations during this era, averaging at 9.5% (slightly above the national average of 8.5% for the same period). However gender balance did not marry with national averages since 10%



more girls were studying for the examination than nationally (57%). Such KS4 outcomes indicated that the subject had been potentially feminine-gendered throughout this period, a particularly interesting outcome when the school's current technological focus across all curriculum stages was considered. It also appeared that large number of able instrumentalists took up GCSE places therefore the dominance of girls in this respect was hardly surprising.

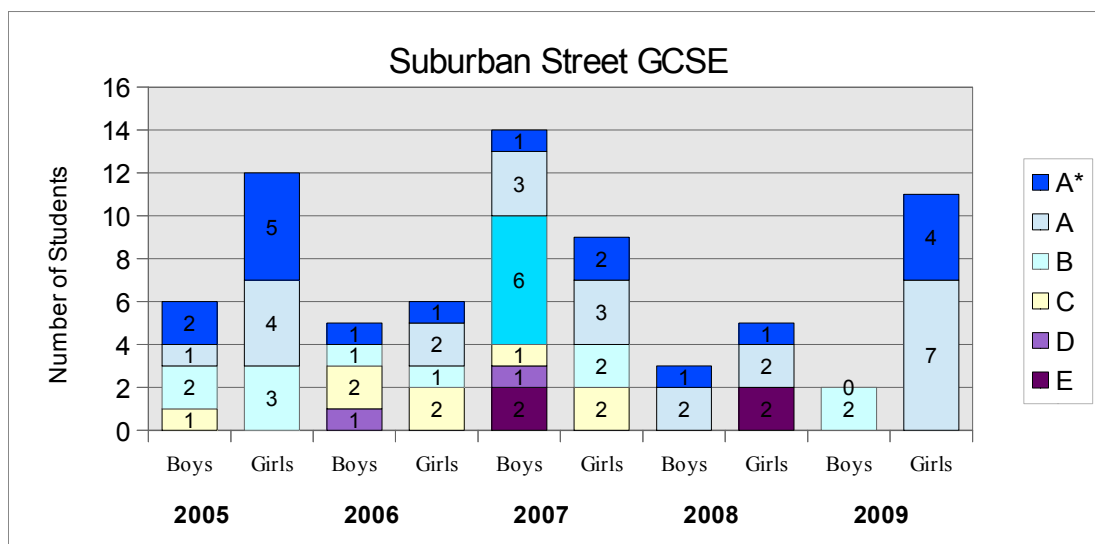
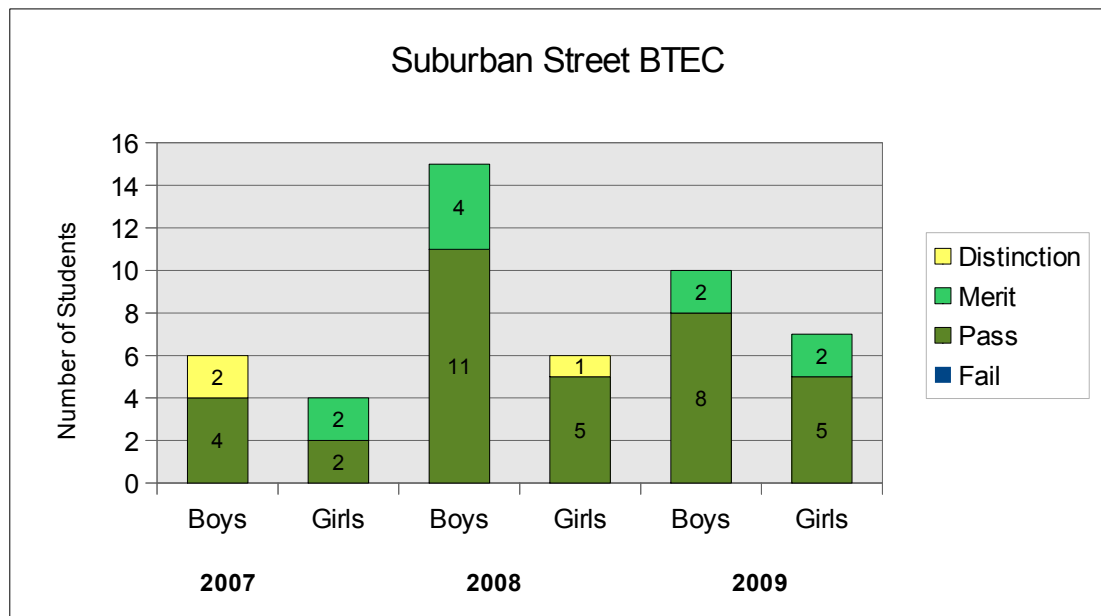


Figure 16: Chart showing previous 5 years' Music GCSE results in relation to gender at Suburban Street

Changes were evidenced in the data regarding outcomes for 2007 however. This seemed to be a pivotal year for several reasons; not only was the GCSE group large (24 students) but for the first time boys outnumbered girls, in line with national trends at this time. It was also the initial year in which the BTEC First Certificate course ran. The group was small in comparison to GCSE (consisting of just 10 students with boys slightly outnumbering girls), potentially signifying that it was a new programme and that its content was relatively unknown to many students. However in 2008 the attractiveness of the two courses reversed; GCSE numbers fell drastically to just six pupils (three of each sex) whilst those of BTEC soared, especially in terms of boys, who now outnumbered girls by a ratio of 2.5: 1.

An even stranger balance was evident in the current Year 11 due to be examined in 2010 (and shown further on in this section in Table 14) since the GCSE group consisted entirely of girls whilst the BTEC group had a ratio of more than 2: 1 in favour of boys. When I later questioned the current HoD he made the following point:

**Mr Benotti (Suburban Street):** I think that this anomaly was created by the previous HoD who left three years ago... she developed a large circle of very able girls, both as instrumentalists and vocalists, however their dominance within the year group seemed to cause negativity amongst the boys who perceived that being good at music was about being female... I found this an impossible situation to turn around when I took over and consequently no boys opted for GCSE from that cohort and less than expected numbers chose BTEC too (despite this assertion, 18 boys still chose to follow this course although perhaps he expected more to do so).



**Figure 17: Chart showing previous 3 years' Music BTEC First Certificate results in relation to gender at Suburban Street**

However the former HoD did not agree with this analysis saying:

**Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):** It's the same in any in-take... you get some years that have a very strong bias...

**AG:** But no boys at all? Were there really no boys in that year that could've taken GCSE?

**Mr H:** It was peculiar but there really weren't. (Since 18 boys had still opted for BTEC it seems unlikely that they were all incapable of GCSE; indeed I later discovered that many passed their BTEC exams with merits and distinctions).

**AG:** Your current HoD put it down to the visibly female orientation of the

department before he took over. Might this have put some boys off ?

**Mr H:** Well I think he’s wrong... I’m sure it’s not true... basically you’ve got far too small a staff to come to any conclusion... also there’s been several personnel changes across that time despite the constancy of my career here...

Unlike Mr Hayward, Mr Benotti seemed to be suggesting that a female teacher who had developed high standards in various feminine-gendered aspects of performing, had severely unbalanced the gendering of KS4 music, including that of a technological course (the possible implication here being that her pedagogy in this respect was also very feminine-gendered despite the masculine appeal of the curriculum content). Nevertheless he appeared to be turning this situation around somewhat, both according to the balance of the current Year 10 GCSE group and next year’s prospective members; boys were now opting again for this examination course, if only in small numbers, although notably, girls’ participation was waning.

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
<b>GCSE YEAR 11</b>	0	14
<b>GCSE YEAR 10</b>	5	9
<b>GCSE YEAR 9</b>	7	9

<b>BTEC YEAR 11</b>	18	8
<b>BTEC YEAR 10</b>	20	9
<b>BTEC YEAR 9</b>	21	9

**Table 14: Showing current and prospective GCSE/BTEC numbers at Suburban Street in relation to gender**

Table 14 reveals that GCSE numbers were now appearing to stabilise at roughly half those of BTEC with girls prevailing in GCSE groups (at approximately a 3: 2 ratio) and boys dominating BTEC (at roughly a 2: 1 ratio). An impressive 28% of the cohort were taking a music course (18.5% BTEC and 9.5% GCSE) however GCSE numbers were barely above national averages (one might expect higher in a school that had specialist performing arts places) and did not reflect the trend of more boys than girls taking the examination. It was in the area of BTEC that vast changes had taken place and it seemed likely that greater numbers of boys were opting due to its masculine-gendered, technological orientation. Overall, departmental pedagogy may also have played some part in this change, in particular that which was operating in KS3, since the

technological focus, as apparent in classroom observations, was clearly preparing many students more appropriately for the requirements of BTEC.

When grade comparisons were considered, girls had achieved higher grades at GCSE across the given time period whereas at BTEC the proportions of boys and girls having achieved Distinction, Merit or Pass was fairly similar. This begs the contentious question as to whether GCSE continues to favour the musical skills of girls over those of boys when considered en masse. In addition no GCSE pupils had received grades lower than 'C' since 2007. This led me to conclude that those who previously may have achieved below C grades (and who were probably less likely to have had formal instrumental lessons) were now being encouraged towards BTEC which could be moulded more successfully to their personal abilities and interests. Again, this issue was further explored in the ensuing interviews but as the HoD confirmed:

*Mr Benotti (Suburban Street):* It is really hard, indeed almost impossible, for any pupil to fail a BTEC unless they do absolutely nothing... but it's quite easy for that same individual to work hard and fail to achieve grade C at GCSE... so I will encourage students in the direction that I feel is appropriate... to achieve the best outcomes... I seem to encourage a lot of boys into taking BTEC... probably more than girls... just because of their obvious technological interests... but with GCSE it really varies from year to year in terms of the gender balance.

When I had the opportunity to look at GCSE results going back beyond the five year period it was evident that all previous groups had been female dominated with girls achieving better results on average too. Since this had occurred during Mr. Hayward's earlier departmental headship, this potentially indicated that his curriculum and pedagogy were traditionally feminine-gendered in their construction. This may also explain why, unlike Mr Benotti, he did not perceive the previous female HoD's practices as being feminised since they resonated with his own. Indeed, despite his apparent liking for the use of technology, Mr. Hayward's preferences for using notation-based software programmes such as Sibelius suggested that his pedagogy was highly structured, theory-based and thus feminine-gendered. He also said of the gender rebalancing encouraged by BTEC:

*Mr Hayward (Suburban Street):* I do remember that there was a time when we

did think we should encourage more boys... but that's a long time ago and look at it now... BTEC has made a difference... it definitely does attract boys... when I tell them that lots of the work is done on computer they say that want to do it.

11.222 Seaside Town

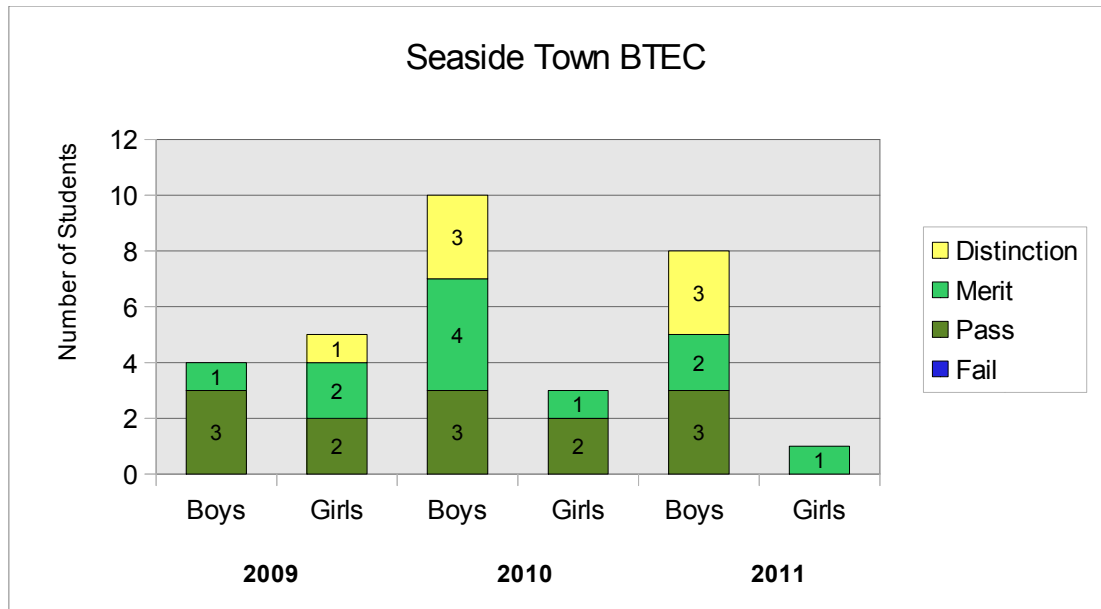


Figure 18: Chart showing previous 3 years' Music BTEC First Certificate results in relation to gender at Seaside Town

As noted in section 3.312, Seaside Town had a limited history in terms of KS4 music; in its previous incarnation there had not been any examination music for many years and BTEC was only recently established. Therefore results were only available from two previous cohorts along with projections for the current Year 11 who were close to completing the course. Outcomes revealed that; firstly, groups comprised of 70% boys throughout this period and secondly (despite a fairly equal distribution of boys across the three hierarchical levels of achievement), girls results were slightly poorer in the top achievement area (distinction) since only one had accomplished this. As the course appeared to be far more performance-based when compared to the content of the Suburban Street BTEC, this was an interesting anomaly; one might have expected more girls to have been attracted to it who in turn would have achieved higher results (especially when considered in the light of gendered traditions and performing).

Nevertheless other factors appeared to be affecting these outcomes. Firstly there was no history of extra-curricular instrumental excellence in the school. Since research suggests that high standards of musicianship amongst a musical elite have a negative effect upon the average classroom musician (Bray, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, O' Neill, 2002, Lamont, 2002), and particularly boys (due to their lesser likelihood of being included), then their absence potentially encouraged more boys to engage at KS4. Secondly, the departmental focus upon learning the instruments of rock/pop music cannot have also encouraged some boys to opt for a performing course that they perceived as being masculine-gendered.

The rather limited instrumental options for females in this department is also a consideration here; guitar, and to a much greater extent drums, are masculine-gendered and as a consequence the majority of girls seemed not to have wanted to learn them. Therefore they had no option but to perform as singers, whether they excelled in this respect or not, and this might help to explain their inferior results. The HoD also gave her reasons as to why boys were particularly attracted to, and more successful at BTEC:

***Ms Renton (Seaside Town):*** When I set up the department I had the option to choose what course I would run... I'd seen the success of BTEC in other schools and I loved the possibilities... that you could tailor the units to the kids with just a couple of compulsory ones. With GCSE you're looking at them being at least Grade 4 to 5 in order to achieve highly... if I'd said we were going to write a musical composition or analyse chord structures of something... I'd immediately have lost these kids, especially the boys... they just don't come from that culture... but if I say that we're going to run a concert on a business model... the boys particularly like this... BTECs lend themselves to boys as they're up for getting involved in planning, marketing, advertising and budgeting...

It is interesting to note that Ms Renton displays slippage in her perceptions here; she substantiates the common myth that GCSE is predominantly about performing despite having both studied and taught this course in the past. Meanwhile, although referencing composing, she perceives it as having to be taught via formal and notation-based pedagogies, no doubt echoing the feminine-gendered methods by which she learnt.

Despite insisting that her BTEC course was particularly favoured by boys, current Year 9 and 10 group totals indicated that girls were increasing in number. The

HoD could give no explanation for this occurrence since there had been no radical changes in syllabus content, staffing, or pedagogical strategies in the interim.

COURSE	BOYS	GIRLS
BTEC YEAR 11	8	1
BTEC YEAR 10	11	7
BTEC YEAR 9*	7	8

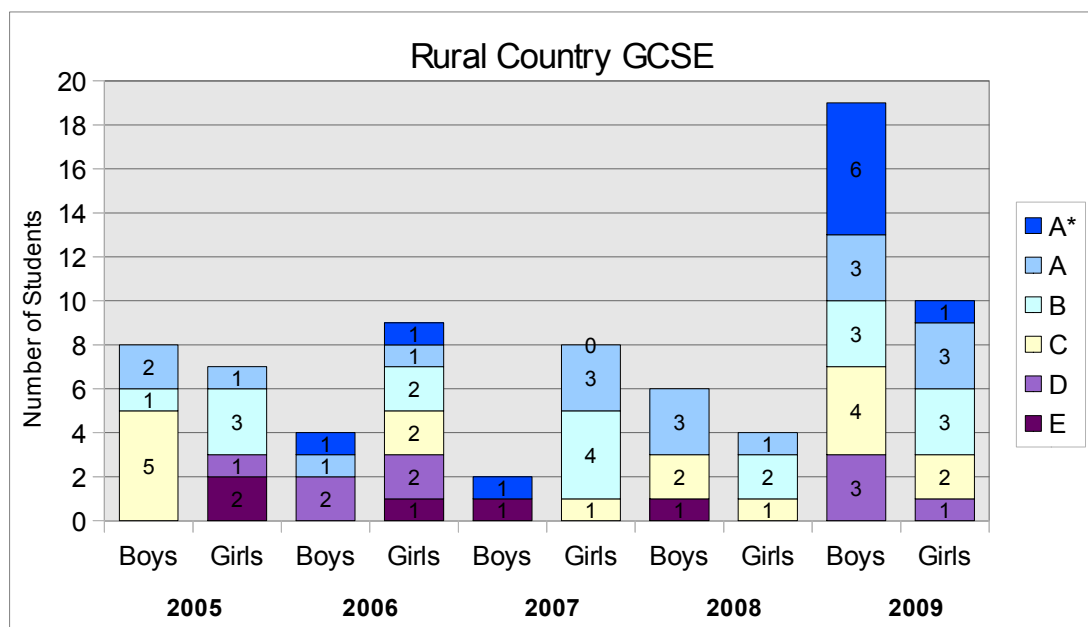
\* Year 9 have already embarked upon examination courses in this school.

**Table 15: Showing current BTEC numbers in Seaside Town in relation to gender**

She also described girls as achieving higher standards in BTEC, despite providing no evidence of this in her examination data; thus demonstrating how traditional perceptions of girls' superiority in performance can override the reality of their actual achievements:

*Ms. Renton (Suburban Street):* At KS4 many girls have chosen the subject because they know that they're good at it – they may not like it but they know that they will succeed. Boys tend to choose music because it's practical and they think that they don't need to write anything down but also because they like it.

### 11.223 Rural Country



**Figure 19: Chart showing previous 5 years' Music GCSE results in relation to gender at Rural Country**

As in Suburban Street, there had been some very odd years in this department's history for example the extreme dominance of girls occurring in 2007. However there appeared to be a marked change in 2009, both in terms of actual numbers and gender balance, since the group had roughly trebled in size when compared to that of the previous year, also having an approximate 2: 1 gender ratio in favour of boys. When the current Year 10 group was examined, this trend appeared further substantiated, since numbers of boys opting remained high but there was a dramatic decrease in girls (just three), creating an imbalance of 6: 1.

<b>COURSE</b>	<b>BOYS</b>	<b>GIRLS</b>
<b>GCSE YEAR 11</b>	19	10
<b>GCSE YEAR 10</b>	15	3

**Table 16: Showing current GCSE numbers in Rural Country in relation to gender**

Unfortunately no predicted Year 9 numbers were available at the time of the research to confirm this trajectory. Nevertheless, the sudden turn-around was important to investigate since it did not appear that any recent changes had been instigated that might explain a surge in boys' interests (such as a radically new KS3 curriculum content, the expansion of technological resources or the establishment of different pedagogical practices). The only obvious influence was the relatively recent arrival of the other full-time teacher who had a degree in music technology and wide musical interests. Although not directly relevant to this study, a similar effect was noted as taking place in KS5 uptake; the 'AS/A' level music groups, primarily taught by the HOD were small and exclusively female however the newly established 'AS' technology group, taught by the assistant, was large and exclusively male.

In addition, although boys in this department reflected the national trend regarding increasing numbers taking GCSE, unlike those nationally, they had *not* generally achieved inferior grade results when compared to their female peers. Since middle-class boys are more liable to gain similar examination results to their female peers (Foster et al. 2001), their higher levels of success in this department were potentially explained; indeed the HoD predicted that many more Year 11 boys would achieve A\* grades than girls. Perhaps most telling however was the fact that many of them, although preferring to work in popular genres, also had a good working knowledge of formal notation.



When questioned about the sorts of pupils who choose GCSE the teacher said:

**Ms Flatley (Rural Country):** It should be the ones who enjoyed their music lessons at KS3... they should be able to access the course without having specialist lessons in anything. There are one or two boys in Year 11 who don't play an instrument very well... and there may be one or two in the current Year 10... but the GCSE pupils generally tend to be able to play a musical instrument. It's interesting to compare the current Year 10 and next year's prospective group with gender. There are 16 boys and three girls in the current group but half of the boys are in my tutor group so that may have helped just a little bit. Next year there'll be 14 girls and four boys though... it may well be that because they are academically a very good year, the boys will be pressurised into triple science and their final option will be something that will *apparently* benefit them greatly later in life rather than music.

It is pertinent to note that she believed that high-achieving boys were put off studying music because the ethos of the school encouraged them to perceive it as non-academic and irrelevant to future prospects (Miller, 1996, Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001, Wright, 2001). However this notion was not particularly supported by the department's KS4 data regarding current the examination groups in which such boys proliferated. The HoD also suggested that able students were disinclined to opt for music but for different reasons:

**Mr Brewer (Rural Country):** It used to be those who had instrumental lessons... but that changed... I think that what we have done with the Year 9 curriculum over the last five years has broadened it out for some students... indeed lots of able musicians choose not to do GCSE because it's not a challenge for them.

The HoD was fundamentally mistaken here since in reality almost all Year 10 and 11 pupils were taking formal instrumental lessons according to data that he supplied; however his mistaken perception may be explained by a failure to consider those learning rock instruments (and who were mostly boys) as being 'proper' instrumentalists.

### *11.23 Pupils on KS4 Music*

Students were specifically asked about reasons for choosing or not choosing KS4 music (although no reference was made to gender in this respect) and overall 200 comments resulted. At KS4 125 remarks were made; 71 about the types of students who do and don't choose music and a further 54 concerning personal reasons for opting (with only 27 referring to gender issues). Of the 75 KS3 statements, most were projections about the personal likelihood of opting in the future (38 from boys and 37 from girls) whilst 40 referred specifically to gender with equal numbers of boys and girls contributing from both ends of the Key Stage. However a substantial number (31) came from Suburban Street where both GCSE and BTEC were available. Pupils here demonstrated some awareness of the differences between the courses that potentially affected their attractiveness regarding girls and boys. Indeed this suggests that departments running both examination opportunities alongside one another can unintentionally create greater gender divisions in the subject, than those who do not.

KS3 pupils across all schools were at odds about the likely balance of KS4 groups. Nevertheless, the majority of boys felt that greater numbers of girls would take music (with the rest divided between equal numbers or boys dominating), whilst the majority of girls felt that boys would mostly opt (with most others indicating that numbers would be equal). Years 7 and 9 comments are separated in this chapter due to the very different profiles that they possess in terms of knowledge about, and likelihood of taking, KS4 music<sup>60</sup>.

#### *11.231 Year 7 Perceptions of KS4 Music*

Although only two Year 7 boys indicated a wish to opt for the subject this is unsurprising since such decision-making was hardly pressing for pupils of this age:

**Shane (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I think I would definitely choose it because I like playing my own music... I like figuring out different types of things in music...

**Colin (Seaside Town/Yr7):** I probably would do it because BTEC provides

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<sup>60</sup> To compare comments made by students in the longitudinal Musical Futures study concerning opting for KS4 music see Hallam et al. (2011: 134 & pp 143-44) for reasons for and against choosing music.

better instruments for you to use than what we use right now... I'd do either guitar or drums at that level.

A further 19 (11 boys and eight girls) indicated that they might consider the subject although the distribution across the schools was most uneven; absolutely no boys but three girls suggested this from Suburban Street alongside six boys and two girls from both Rural Country and Seaside Town. Furthermore, of the 24 who stated that they would never opt for music (12 boys and 12 girls) 13 came from Suburban Street (eight of them boys) and nine were from Rural Country (seven of them girls). This confirms that pupils from Seaside Town, with its lack of GCSE and a focus upon classroom rather than extra-curricular activities, were more open-minded about the possibility of KS4 music (Bray, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002).

The responses from Suburban Street, where KS3 students experienced a far more diverse curriculum and pedagogy than those in the other schools, were perhaps surprisingly negative. Several argued that they would not choose music because they either disliked it or believed that it would be too difficult for them since one needed to be a highly-skilled instrumentalist to take any form of music examination course. Coming from students who attended a school in which public performance standards were frequently deemed outstanding, this misguided attitude was understandable:

**Megan (Suburban Street/Yr7):** No I don't think that I will (opt) 'cos I'm not that good at playing...

**Mercy (Suburban Street/Yr7):** ... those that play the violin will choose it...

In more academically-motivated Rural Country, some Year 7 girls (unlike any in the other two schools) were quite dismissive of GCSE requirements, having already discounted any idea of taking it. Reasons for this concerned the belief that they were already of GCSE performing standard anyway (whilst failing to consider that the exam consists of other equally important disciplines in which they had far less experience):

***Rural Country Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Poppy:** I'd like to carry on with the flute but I wouldn't bother to do the examination in music...

**Georgina:** I don't think that I would either 'cos my piano teacher says that lots of stuff I know already.

**Rebecca:** No I wouldn't opt because I've already got GCSE equivalent level in singing so I don't really need to...

Five boys from this school, but only one girl, also mentioned the inappropriateness of the subject in relation to their intended future careers (Miller, 1996, Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001, Wright, 2001):

**Chris (Rural Country/Yr7):** I wouldn't take music 'cos there's not many careers that you would need music for...

**Susannah (Rural Country/Yr7):** ... there are other subjects that are far more important to my future...

Only one pupil indicated the importance of the teacher in their final decision:

**Cassie (Rural Country/Yr7):** Well I hate it, so no. If we got a different teacher maybe... then that might change my mind... but really... I don't like it.

Several Year 7 students who were unsure about music as a possible future option indicated that various factors would dictate their choices, with boys in particular arguing that studying up-to-date genres, using appropriate instruments and having more musical autonomy were vital considerations:

**Anna (Suburban Street/Yr7):** I might carry on... 'cos I really like it... it depends on the next two years... what we actually do in music...

**Jonathan (Rural Country/Yr7):** It really depends on what types of things you do in GCSE... I would look at the time and make my decision then.

**Harry (Rural Country/Yr7):** Well is there a lot of set work or more free choice at GCSE? If it was all about keyboards then I probably won't take it but if I get to do some of the stuff on the guitar then I would.

In specific relation to gender-balance, several boys mentioned that girls dominated GCSE groups because of their superior instrumental and vocal abilities whilst one also referred to boys' greater likelihood of opting for BTEC:

***Rural Country Year 7 boys' discussion***

**AG:** What sorts of people choose to do GCSE music?

**Callum:** Girls! It's because they put more effort into the work that they're doing... I don't know... I think that the girls would probably enjoy it more... they have a better relationship with the keyboard.

**Billy:** Probably some of the girls will choose it because like because they're probably going to have more chance of getting somewhere... more than us...

***Suburban Street Year 7 boys' discussion***

**David:** I think that girls like it a bit more but... there's still lots of boys doing it.

**Leroy:** Girls are more likely to do it 'cos they really enjoy singing... loads and loads of girls will pick it and there'll be three maybe four boys...

**Sam:** I think boys will probably go for BTEC music, mixing CDs and DJ-ing... and girls more GCSE... (the only Year 7 boy to show knowledge of this course).

Meanwhile a group of girls suggested that boys were more likely to opt due to their superior levels of instrumental ability and creativity:

***Suburban Street Year 7 girls' discussion***

**Gemma:** I think there'd be a few boys who'd do it because some in our class play drums and guitar...

**Keisha:** I think probably more boys 'cos they like the drums... more play outside of school and have lessons...

**Mercy:** Exactly... they might take it seriously when it's coming up to GCSE...

Just two boys stressed that gender was not a determining factor:

**Gary (Suburban Street/Yr7):** When you get older and more responsible you're not just going to follow like sheep when it comes to Year 9 options... you're gonna do what you want to do...

**Ben (Suburban Street/Yr7):** Sometimes it's not all about what other people think... you've got to make your own decisions...

### *11.232 Year 9 Perceptions of KS4 Music*

Year 9 pupils (Year 8 in Seaside Town) had already made their option choices therefore the comments were not projections; as a consequence their responses about continuing with music were either completely positive or negative according to this factor. Of the formally interviewed students, only two boys had chosen GCSE and both were outstanding instrumentalists from Suburban Street. In addition another five from this school had opted for the technology-orientated BTEC (notably only one was female) and just one girl had opted for BTEC at Seaside Town. Most surprisingly not one of the randomly selected Year 9 pupils interviewed from Rural Country had chosen music despite a fair number of them having indicated that they were highly active in extra-curricular activities. This potentially suggests that taking KS4 music, although not learning music itself, is viewed as unimportant by many active musicians in this school.

Those who had opted for music in Suburban Street declared there to be a clear division between the types of pupil that had chosen either course; the notion that GCSE was all about performing and BTEC about working with computers prevailed.

**Nat (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I chose GCSE because I play an instrument... I mean all the teachers told me to take it... and I think it's maybe... a more advanced level of music at GCSE... in the composition you actually have to know how to write music down and stuff...

**Morris (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I chose BTEC... because I think that I'm better with all the computing skills rather than real instruments... 'cos I don't really play outside of school... I'm better on the computers in lessons...

**Martha (Suburban Street/Yr9):** Yeah, I've chosen BTEC because I'm not sure that I'd be able to do GCSE because I've never played an instrument before...

Pupils' concerns regarding the need for high instrumental skills at GCSE were so strong that they even caused a Grade 4 standard trombonist to think that he was not able to opt:

**James (Suburban Street/Yr9):** I chose BTEC... even though I play trombone because I'm not strong enough to play it yet... especially not for GCSE... and I'm not really good on the piano... so it wouldn't be the best for me to do like the live playing... I'd be better on computers...

At Rural Country, several who had not chosen GCSE also suggested that those who did, excelled at performance:

**Sarah (Rural Country/Yr9):** The really talented people... advanced... who are really good and putting that talent to use... (*Chorus of 'yeahs' from others.*)

**Kevin (Rural Country/Yr9):** In our class it'll be people who are doing music lessons and are like Grade 5 standard...

The following group of boys from Rural Country were quite insulting about those who might opt, intimating that they were either strange, emotionally unstable or held unfashionable musical tastes (this may have been prompted by the classically-orientated curriculum in evidence in this school). These comments certainly support research outcomes suggesting that many boys reject subjects that require apparently feminine qualities (like sensitivity) such as music, drama and art (Colley et al., 1994, Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, Arnot et al., 1999, Colley & Comber, 2003b, Paechter, 2009):

***Rural Country Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Oliver:** ... (*loudly*) NURDS!!! (*Lot of general laughter.*)

**William:** It's people who enjoy pianos and like other types of music...

**Josh:** Well I think that it's the people who are very dramatic and over-emotional... actually nurdy types... (*Chorus of agreement.*)

**Matt:** I think that it's probably taken by people who might already play the piano or like the sort of music that we're doing...

**Mark:** Yeah... I think it's people who like the classical music stuff... people who like learning about Beethoven rather than the Rolling Stones or something.

Two interviewees from Rural Country, indicated that those who wished to have musical careers, including in the realms of pop music, would also choose GCSE:

**Jenny (Rural Country/Yr9):** There are also other people that don't necessarily get good grades but who want to work in the music industry... recording, singing or playing an instrument of any sort....

**Morris (Rural Country/Yr9):** It's people who are really good or who want to get famous in the music business... apart from that not many people...

Those in Year 9 who did not choose music at KS4 gave such reasons as; a lack of interest or ability, the greater importance of other subjects, but also the irrelevance of music to career plans (views expressed more frequently by Rural Country students, particularly boys) as the following exemplifies:

***Suburban Street Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Morris:** I haven't taken music 'cos it's not a big part of my life... I mean I listen to music, I love music but I took more practical subjects like engineering, construction...

Many of the reasons for not opting for KS4 music resonated with those expressed by students in the Musical Futures research who had dropped music by phase 3 of the study. Indeed the three most commonly expressed in that study were: having to choose between music and other subjects; not being able to play an instrument or sing well enough (although 47% of these said they could play or sing in previous phases) and not seeing the relevance of music for career prospects (Hallam et al., 2011: 22).

As far as GCSE was concerned there was a divide between those who had not chosen music, and believed it to be female dominated, and those who had opted and disputed this. Boys in particular were defensive of their choice at GCSE, wishing to portray the subject as masculine-gendered at this level as this discussion reveals:

***Suburban Street Year 9 boys' discussion***

**Karl:** I know lots of boys doing music....

**Darren:** Definitely more boys...

**Karl:** I don't know any girl that's picked GCSE...

**Nat:** ... Yeah, there are a few... I think the thing is that this is the subject that boys will choose... 'cos girls might choose dance or drama or something...



However Suburban Street students took a more relaxed attitude towards boys opting for BTEC, since the course in this school was strongly masculine-gendered in its technological construction. Some Suburban Street girls felt that boys would dominate both types of exam groups but girls would more likely suit GCSE:

***Suburban Street Year 9 girls' discussion***

**Abbie:** More boys opt... 'cos most boys are keen on music...

**Lisa:** ...I think more boys have taken music than girls this year because... the boys just seem more musical... and I think that if the girls were going to choose then they'd probably choose GCSE because it's with instruments... the boys like the keyboards... and they'll go for BTEC more...

**Rhianna:** ...more boys have chosen BTEC... I think 'cos it's more practical and therefore they might enjoy it...

Views on gender and opting for music in Seaside Town were less clear with no particular feeling that boys or girls were dominant and perhaps reflecting greater gender neutrality in this performance-based BTEC:

***Seaside Town Year 8 girls' discussion***

**Stella:** I think its more girls.. lots of boys would rather do public services or PE.

**Arjana:** No... more boys do music... I remember when I came in the music department one day and older people were in here.... it looked like it was all boys and just one girl... I only know four girls that do BTEC and they all sing...

Just one girl suggested that gender was not really salient in subject choice:

**Jenny (Rural Country/Yr9):** I wouldn't say that it's boys versus girls because some boys are really good at music... so its not about girls and boys... it's about whether they like music or not.

***11.233 KS4 Students' Reasons for Choosing Music***

Ten KS4 students proffered diverse reasons for who opts at KS4. A general love of music was deemed important as the following sample reveal:

**Warren (Rural Country/GCSE):** Yeah, I'd chosen other boring subjects, so I thought that it would be a bit more relaxing... and I do enjoy it...

**Paula (Seaside Town/BTEC):** Well ever since I was young I've always loved music... as a whole and every genre really... so it seemed the thing to do... It's a really interesting subject...

Several also indicated that they chose musical courses as they had relevance to future career paths:

**Florence (Rural Country/GCSE):** It's sort of what I want to do when I leave school... something to do with the music industry...

**Richard (Rural Country/GCSE):** When I'm older I want to pursue a career in music... maybe in a band... I've loved music since Year 7... so I had to take it...

**Aaron (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I took it because I thought that it might help with going into a media career... so if I do sound... you have to know about all the different types of wave and the correct microphones to use and so on.

**Beneasha (Seaside Town/BTEC):** People with ambitions like me choose... I'd like to become a performing artist...

The most popular reasons for choosing GCSE, as expressed by nearly all students following this course, concerned that respondents, whether male or female, believed themselves to have good performance skills. As amongst the less well informed KS3 pupils, this discipline was also disproportionately assumed to define the essence of musicianship for KS4 students, no doubt reflecting its perceived importance in the wider society. In Suburban Street, five girls taking GCSE also commented upon how their preference for instrumental performance over music technology had strongly prompted them to opt:

**Samantha (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I'm not really into electronic stuff... I do more classical stuff so GCSE was more appropriate.

**Jasmine (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I didn't take BTEC because I'm not really technical.

These views were somewhat of an oversimplification of the situation however since the students had failed to recognise the significant amount of technology that they were commonly using in the production of their GCSE composition work.

Five KS4 students from Rural Country believed that those who were part of informal rock bands (and thus most likely male) frequently opted as it was important to achieve musical qualifications when pursuing a musical career. One might hypothesise that such views are indicative of the greater emphasis placed upon the acquisition of formal musical skills in this particular department.

**Warren (Rural Country/GCSE):** Some people just like it casually and then there's the people that play in bands and stuff... they're more likely to take it...

In Suburban Street the majority of BTEC students gave personal reasons as to why they felt that GCSE was unsuitable for them. The most commonly expressed, as typified by the following, concerned a lack of perceived instrumental ability coupled with a liking for technology:

**Barry (Suburban Street/BTEC):** GCSE is for people who play the actual instruments... a lot of people who don't play instruments choose BTEC.

**Greg (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I know that I play instruments but most of them (GCSE students) play to a really high standard... high grades... and they go to lots of music clubs and things like that...

Three KS4 students at Rural Country also showed an awareness of the sorts of pupils that would never choose GCSE music, possibly indicating a wide division in this school between music and sport (Koza, 1994, Harrison, 2007).

**Gabby (Rural Country):** ... there's those on the musical side and then there's those on the sporty side of things who don't choose music...

**Katherine (Rural Country):** The sporty types... they don't choose music though.

Somewhat surprisingly, misunderstandings about the courses still abounded at this level: one might have expected students from Suburban Street to have had a greater understanding of the requirements of both courses but some demonstrated poor knowledge of the one they had *not* chosen. The fact that staff also channelled pupils into the course considered most suitable for them is also an issue since pupils may have not been made fully aware of alternative options.

**Gareth (Suburban Street/GCSE):** BTEC pupils think that GCSE is all about playing or singing to a really high standard. I mean you do have to but it's not as high as they think. If you like computers then go to BTEC but if you prefer to know about music, its origins, and how to compose and play, then do GCSE.

**Samantha (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I think that because there's so many people doing instruments here... BTEC people think that they don't fit in to this type of GCSE class.

**Jasmine (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I do think that boys take BTEC rather than GCSE 'cos of the more technical side, including doing the lights and whatever as well as the music... I mean when it comes to BTEC people actually making real music they wouldn't have a clue what to do.

It is interesting to note that this last interviewee does not consider computer-generated music to be 'real' music like that which she performs on her instrument.

Two pupils from Rural Country also indicated that GCSE was perceived as elitist and classical-based (known to be unpopular with boys (Tarrant et al., 2001a)) by the average pupil in their school:

**Zak (Rural Country/GCSE):** Many people in Year 9 thought that music was all about classical music and so automatically didn't choose it... there needs to be more freedom and more options further down the school to get people interested in the subject...

**Richard (Rural Country/GCSE):** ...some people think that music is... well like a posh subject...

Of the 27 KS4 statements relating to gender, 19 were made by girls. In addition, only three came from middle-class Rural Country where it appeared that such issues were less pressing in students' considerations of the wider picture. All BTEC boys at Suburban Street were adamant that they chose it because they had a greater preference for all things technological:

**Jodie (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I think that more boys choose BTEC... because it's a bit more technical and they're a bit more interested in the computers compared to the girls...

**Freddy (Suburban Street/BTEC):** I think this sounds a bit sexist... BTEC's more of a boys' thing 'cos it's like gadgets...

**Scott (Suburban Street/BTEC):** ... you're one of a load of lads in BTEC... and technology appeals much more to us boys...

There was just one voice of dissent concerning female practices in this school:

**Nabib (Suburban Street/BTEC):** Girls like dance music so they might like the idea of making tracks in BTEC...

Despite BTEC having been more performance-based at Seaside Town, the following KS4 girls appeared divided as to which gender might prefer the pop-orientated course:

**Beneasha (Seaside Town/BTEC):** Boys are more likely to choose because they like to do drumming and guitars...

**Jade (Seaside Town/BTEC):** I think girls because a lot of them want to be singers... boys are not as interested in it as the girls are...

Only two pupils stressed that gender was not really an issue at KS4:

**Stephanie (Suburban Street/GCSE):** I think anyone can take music really... it's not about boys and girls...

**Aiden (Rural Country/GCSE):** ... there just happen to be lots of boys playing in bands and stuff who chose it in our year... but that wouldn't happen in others necessarily...

Meanwhile one boy with instrumental skills indicated that the gender balance of the course crucially affected his choice:

**Scott (Suburban Street/BTEC):** Well there's definitely more girls in GCSE classes... that's what put me off it... one of my friends is in the group and says there's loads of girls... I wouldn't like it because the focus is then on you because you're the odd one out... there's less pressure when you're one of a load of lads...

### **11.3 Summary and Conclusion**

Despite difficulties in ascertaining the trajectory of the subject's gendering at KS4, the data emanating from this study reveals some patterns and trends that may reflect the broader picture. Key outcomes suggest that:

- Music continues to maintain a long-established tradition of being a minority subject after the age of 14 (QCA, 2007a, Ofsted, 2012); the introduction of BTEC has encouraged students with a wide range of skills and interests but on average the subject still fails to attract large numbers of pupils of either sex (although individual school profiles vary enormously).
- Reasons for *all* students' rejection of KS4 music were based upon two premises: firstly misconceptions about the difficult demands of the subject but particularly regarding an overestimation of the importance of performance standards at GCSE and technological skills at BTEC (Lamont & Maton, 2008, 2010); and conversely, perceptions that the subject lacked enough rigour or academic importance in relation to individuals' future career intentions (Crowther & Durkin, 1982 Miller, 1996, Hayward & Mac an Ghail, 2001, Wright, 2001). Many of these notions appeared to be operating from as early as Year 7 and did

not decrease as KS3 progressed despite pupils' greater likelihood of receiving more accurate information about examination options by Year 9.

- KS3 students from Suburban Street were most likely to reject the idea of opting for music despite having encountered a more diverse curriculum and less formal pedagogies, whilst those from Seaside Town were least likely. Since Suburban Street had the highest levels of extra-curricular engagement in evidence and Seaside Town none it is hypothesised that the average pupils' perceptions of the musical elitism operating in departments (Bray, 2000, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Lamont, 2002) caused many to reject examination music from an early age.
- The most extreme negativity towards opting was demonstrated by some Year 7 boys from Suburban Street, which had the most macho culture in evidence (Connell, 1995, 2000, Frosh, 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallota-Chiarolli, 2003) potentially a product of its dominant white, working-class demographic. Indeed homophobic paranoia about being involved in music was expressed by more KS3 boys from this school than the others (the least being evident in middle-class Rural Country) and might help to explain their early rejection of the subject (Koza, 1994, Lamont & Tarrant, 2001, Harrison, 2007, 2009). However, the technological BTEC at Suburban Street with its masculine-gendered content was somewhat counter-acting this problem since it was attracting mainly boys.
- Slightly more boys than girls opted for KS4 music across all schools in the study with the ratio for both courses being around 11: 9 in their favour although once again there were huge variations between departments. This seems to confirm that the past easing of GCSE demands (especially in terms of notational issues) (QCA, 2007) alongside the greater flexibility of BTEC (in terms of personalised learning) are both encouraging more boys to opt nowadays.
- KS4 examination populations did not reflect current national trends concerning BTEC (Edexcel, 2013) in that the girl-boy balance was far less extreme in this study. This may indicate that BTEC numbers for girls will rise as current cohorts are examined or alternatively that a greater number of HoDs running performance-based rather than technological BTECs, had answered the questionnaire.
- In the third of those schools where both examinations ran alongside each other, it seemed likely that teachers' channelled pupils into one or other course (as exemplified in Suburban Street); those with advanced instrumental skills,

(especially if notation aware) being encouraged towards GCSE and those with more informal practical skills or good technical ability, towards BTEC. As a consequence, GCSE potentially becomes a highly specialist course for those accessing the 'extra' musical curriculum of instrumental lessons and ensembles (this was certainly true in Suburban Street), the greater number of whom tend to be girls. In addition, if the BTEC on offer is highly technological (as in Suburban Street) it potentially appeals to those with more informal or computer-based skills, who are more likely to be boys. It is hypothesised therefore that the introduction of a technologically-orientated BTEC running parallel with GCSE can create wider gender divisions at KS4.

- Since HoDs in the survey were not asked to identify the nature of their BTEC courses (in terms of whether they were performance or technologically orientation) it was impossible to compare the relationship between course content and gender balance. However in the two focus schools in which BTEC operated it was very clear that a technological route (as in Suburban Street) had a far larger appeal to boys whilst a performance route (as in Seaside Town) was of interest to both sexes. Nevertheless it is suggested that an individual department's ethos will have a powerful effect upon pupils' thoughts about opting for music and the resulting gender balance of groups, regardless of the KS4 course in operation; one promoting informal engagement in popular genres and technologies would likely encourage many boys whilst one utilising more conventional practices and methods, especially those involving traditional instruments, would be more attractive to girls.
- In one of the focus schools (Rural Country) there was evidence of a woman with strong technological abilities having a powerful influence upon boys' likelihood of opting for GCSE music and beyond, despite her inability to influence the KS3 curriculum in this respect. It is suggested that her capacity to promise boys a far more technologically orientated course at KS4 was a persuasive factor in attracting them, however it is important to note that all of these boys were highly musically literate too. I would suggest that her likelihood of attracting boys with purely informal skills was more limited however, especially as the KS3 curriculum was most unappealing and non-inclusive for such pupils.
- Grade outcomes concerning both GCSE and BTEC in the focus schools were not particularly in line with those nationally (indicating that on average, girls



achieve higher results in both examinations (DfE, 2013, Edexcel 2013)). This suggests that other influences may come into play apart from gender, for example social class. Although girls achieved higher results in GCSE at dominantly working class Suburban Street (and in line with national findings), this was not true at middle-class Rural Country where most boys attained as highly as, or better than, girls. Meanwhile the sexes achieved similarly in BTEC at both Seaside Town and Suburban Street, despite national results suggesting greater overall female success (see Table 3).

- The migration of many boys with more informal musical skills towards BTEC has the potential to drastically affect grade outcomes at GCSE therefore. Indeed such changes may soon result in a minority of all students, but particularly boys, taking the exam as it increasingly becomes perceived as relevant only to those possessing traditional instrumental skills and notational awareness. As a result, boys may eventually achieve grade parity with girls, thus eradicating current differentials; indeed this patterning was evident in both Rural Country and Suburban Street GCSE trends.
- The potential for a technologically-orientated course to alienate girls may result in them becoming confined to pursuing the more conventional demands of GCSE with its inclusion of performance and listening skills (in which they believe themselves to be successful) and its reduced emphasis upon technological requirements in the execution of composition tasks (in which many perceive themselves as less efficacious). Alternatively, girls may also become more attracted to taking BTEC Performing Arts courses (that only require skills in instrumental playing or singing) where there is no necessity to confront potential concerns about their abilities in more masculine-gendered aspects of musical engagement such as composing or using technology.

## **Chapter 12: Final Summary and Conclusions**

This mixed-methods study has made a historical and comparative exploration of the gendering of music education, both contextualising it within the immediate field of literature as well as that concerning broader issues surrounding gender and education. It has examined the core activities and genres of which the music curriculum in England is typically comprised, alongside a range of pedagogical strategies via which it is delivered, in order to investigate present-day participants' commonly held perceptions.

The study implemented a survey as the first stage of research (directly emulating L. Green's questionnaire (1993)) with the intention of giving it both perspective and credibility through providing a suitable backdrop against which the current status of music education could be assessed. In addition the mass data regarding departmental staffing, facilities, resources, curricular programmes and pedagogical strategies have contributed towards a broader picture concerning the subject's profile, particularly when viewed alongside that emanating from other recent projects (Henley, 2011, D'Amore, 2013, Zeserson et al., 2014). Meanwhile the in-depth case studies of three sample music departments and their populations have provided more detailed scenarios of music education in action across a variety of school settings.

Finally, and unique to this study, the thesis has presented a gendered framework consisting of paired descriptive criteria based upon key findings extracted from the body of related literature. It has been my intention to use this model as a tool to assist in the assessment of the gendering of music education within the current climate (this will be further considered in section **12.2**).

### **12.1 Limitations of the Research**

At this juncture it is important to reiterate that since this has been a relatively small-scale investigation, its claims cannot be upheld as definitive proof of any national trends. Despite this, the study supplies insights into a range of issues which, it is hoped, when considered collectively alongside others with similar orientations, can usefully contribute towards a more global frame of reference. It is also acknowledged that the breadth of some aspects of the study, in terms of the many themes explored across a wide research base, can easily promote generalisations that oversimplify the complex dynamics in action. Indeed it would have been equally relevant to have taken a more

localised but detailed approach, for example by exploring the multiple constructions of masculinity and femininity that exist within a single music class. However, by gradually narrowing the spotlight from a wide-ranging but potentially superficial approach on one hand (the survey), to a more restricted but nuanced pathway on the other (the case-studies), I have attempted to marry the tensions that I perceive to exist between these contrasting procedures.

Many of the potential limitations of the research surfaced long after data collection and during detailed analysis. For example, the importance of the types of BTEC music courses that schools ran (especially as to whether they were performance- or technologically-orientated) and their consequential effect upon gendered participation, only emerged during fieldwork in the focus schools. If this had been comprehensively explored in the earlier questionnaire, then undoubtedly a more informed perspective may have emerged from this wider resource base. Similarly, although surveyed HoDs were asked whether their schools ran other KS4 courses that might deter students from opting for music (such as Performing Arts), gendered breakdowns were not requested (although some respondents did supply such information). Once again greater data acquisition in this area would also have assisted in the formulation of a more refined overview concerning gendered participation at examination level.

Finally, although transcription and analysis were carried out as soon as possible after data collection, various problems emerged that were difficult to counteract. For example, due to unavoidable limitations in terms of time and resources, it was not feasible to follow up survey respondents' statements that required further clarification; this process had to be restricted to those who became part of the second stage sample if the project was to remain manageable. Meanwhile, although it was possible to engage in detailed questioning during the observation and interview periods, certain outcomes and conclusions only emerged after deeper and repeated re-analysis of texts, often a substantial amount of time after the fieldwork had ended. Unfortunately this meant that it was usually not viable to return to these themes, especially due to prohibitive practicalities such as changes in departmental staffing and pupils.

The suggested framework of descriptive criteria regarding the identification of the gendering of curriculum and pedagogy (Table 4), will now be thoroughly reviewed regarding the effectiveness of its role in data analysis and its potential for further development and usage.

## **12.2 The Framework of Descriptive Criteria for Identifying the Gendering of Curriculum and Pedagogy: Benefits and Drawbacks**

It should be recalled (see section 2.62) that this framework was developed with a twofold function; firstly, to identify, and thus direct attention towards, those areas of curriculum and pedagogy that warranted deeper consideration regarding their gendering and secondly to provoke dialogue about the relationship between gender and all aspects of school music.

In the first of these respects, the framework proved helpful when reviewing and analysing emerging data, especially that emanating from the focus schools. Most importantly, it targeted attention upon the main thrust of the research question; ‘to what extent is it reasonable to understand curriculum content and pedagogy in secondary music education, as gendered?’ As previously hypothesised, outcomes from this study confirmed that absolutely no departments (whether in the first or second stage of research) exhibited consistent patterns of gendered extremes. Instead they displayed more complex scenarios, demonstrating a mix of both feminine and masculine-gendered strands of curricula and pedagogies in action according to a wide variety of factors; from the influences of broader school dictates, departmental traditions and available resources, to the impact of individual teachers’ and pupils’ beliefs and behaviours about gender and music. The framework was helpful in unpicking these various threads, especially when considering their hierarchical functioning, the outcome of which ultimately determined whether it was reasonable to conclude that a dominantly masculine- or feminine-gendered ethos prevailed.

For example, despite the historical prominence of an elite group of musical performers at Suburban Street (as part of a feminine-gendered tradition of musical excellence in the classical sphere), its ascendancy was gradually being eroded by the current department’s adoption of music technology with its masculine-gendered orientation. In particular this made its presence felt through the provision of a widening range of musical opportunities and pedagogies that were appropriate for a broader spectrum of pupil participants. As a consequence, the nature of KS4 music was changing, since a technologically-orientated BTEC course was becoming increasingly popular (especially with boys) and superseding the former dominance of the more feminine-gendered (and consequently girl-dominated) GCSE of many years standing. In effect the framework assisted in pinpointing those prevailing practices that were driving

departmental transformations whilst also helping to map the effect of these changes upon pupils' engagement.

The second aim of the framework, concerning its ability to promote useful discussion amongst music educators, has yet to be tested. Indeed if many remain somewhat ignorant of, or confused about, gender in relation to the current environment (as this study suggests) then engagement with the model could have useful repercussions. It is hoped that it can encourage teachers to develop more informed perspectives about gender and music, founded upon research-based evidence rather than anecdotal opinion, whilst in addition, it may encourage them to make more insightful choices about the curricula content and pedagogical strategies that they employ.

### **12.3 Unexpected Outcomes**

The unexpected outcomes emerging from this research were primarily about girls' relationship with school music and dispelled some of the myths that are commonly expounded. Not only did they challenge my previous perceptions about female engagement but also those expressed by their teachers and male peers alike. In particular the supposition that girls were more positive towards school music was not upheld since the majority of female interviewees in the second research phase held similar views to their male counterparts. One notable exception concerned singing however; boys' responses were so unfavourable regarding this activity that comparatively, girls' were more encouraging, although not effusive.

Nevertheless, despite agreement in most areas of discussion, girls still appeared to display greater overall musical engagement than their male counterparts in everyday interactions; exhibiting those attributes, if only superficially, that are historically aligned with the female (such as compliance, illustriousness and determination (see section 2.3)). It thus seems that many girls were masking their discontent or boredom so well in the classroom that it was impossible for me to discern any underlying levels of disaffection during my observations. Meanwhile, and quite understandably, both adult and peer respondents in the study presumed girls' to like the subject far more than boys.

A further consequence of this situation was that teachers also expressed relatively less concerns about girls' enjoyment of music (section 5.42). Although a somewhat surprising outcome, I suggest that once again this may be the result of their greater levels of overall compliance and introversion in school, which ultimately leads

to misconceptions about their relationship with the subject.

Another, widely-held perception that was not substantiated by data from this study was that girls tend to participate more in extra-curricular music-making, both in terms of instrumental lessons and group activities (Ofsted, 2012). This study confirms that girls do partake in greater numbers when initially arriving at secondary school (O'Neill et al., 2001, Hallam et al., 2008, Harrison, 2009), unlike many boys who view transition as an appropriate time to leave musical activities behind in favour of more obviously masculine-gendered pursuits such as sport (Koza, 1994, Paechter, 2000, Harrison, 2007)). However, girls also appear to drift away from musical involvement, albeit slightly later on, in the second year of secondary education. Indeed by the end of KS3 very few pupils in this study were participating at all, leaving a core of dedicated musicians (of both sexes) to partake and who were almost exclusively those intending to take GCSE music (as seen in both Rural Country and Suburban Street).

#### **12.4 Contribution to Knowledge and Implications for Practice**

As identified in the previous section, a key concern surrounds many teachers' presumptions; that gendered differences have melted away in the past two decades as new curriculum content and pedagogical approaches have transformed the subject. A particularly common view is that these contemporary practices (as exemplified in the use of pop music and technologies) are gender-neutral in their appeal, content and execution, despite much research (including that emanating from this study) suggesting otherwise.

The following sub-sections summarise the main issues arising from the study, focusing in turn upon KS3 boys, KS3 girls, KS4 students and teachers. It is important to reiterate that the conclusions are overall assumptions about the populations under discussion; numerous individuals were encountered who did not comply with these generalisations however the focus of the research remains upon prevailing norms whilst acknowledging the wider spectrum of gendered beliefs and behaviour that exist.

##### *12.41 Boys and KS3 Music*

Outcomes concerning boys' relationship with KS3 music were much as anticipated, resonating with findings emanating from previous research within the field and

emerging from broader educational realms concerning boys and schooling (see section 2.2). In classroom observations they were generally seen to be more physical, assertive and openly disruptive than girls (Skelton & Francis, 2009), frequently participating in low-level misbehaviour when disinterested but revealing high levels of concentration and absorption when appropriately stimulated (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997).

Boys in this study were also more likely than girls to demonstrate greater confidence in their abilities regardless of the musical outcomes (Green, 1997), flout the authority of teachers in terms of rule-breaking (Warrington et al., 2000) and exhibit literacy problems, including both weaker English language skills (Jones & Myhill, 2004, Younger et. al., 2005) and poorer standards regarding the use of musical notation (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). Musically able boys were rarely visible in classroom observations despite their clear emergence at KS4 in all three focus schools. This suggests that they tend to comply with behavioural norms in order survive potential homophobic bullying (Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003) in a subject that I suggest is more strongly feminine-gendered at KS3 according to many (but certainly not all) departments' curricula content and pedagogical strategies (and as evidenced in Seaside Town and Rural Country).

In terms of musical engagement, boys in this study mostly preferred interactions with popular genres (such as rock and rap) and technology, particularly through composing and improvising their own music in informal group situations (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997); pursuits that strongly define traditional constructs of masculinity such as power, logic and reason (Green 1997, Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, Arnot et al., 1999, Paechter, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2009). They tended to shun formal aspects of learning, including performing from notation, listening and appraising and particularly anything involving classical music. In essence they voted with their feet, engaging positively with the subject when allowed to take part in tasks that played to their preferences, whilst displaying behavioural issues when forced to comply with those that did not.

The most negative aspect of music for KS3 boys concerned singing, especially regarding teacher-organised vocal ensembles such as choir membership, which many labelled as 'gay' (Koza, 1994). In particular the fear of the homosexual taunts that might ensue resulted in most boys in this study confirming that they would never consider involvement in singing at secondary level (Koza, 1994, Frosh et al., 2002, 2003, Martino & Pallotta-Chiarolli, 2003, Hall, 2005, Harrison 2007, 2009). This

appears to confirm that the activity maintains its overtly feminine delineations (Green, 1993, 1996/2010, 1997) despite recent assertions that gender imbalances in participation can be overcome if teachers utilise more boy-orientated repertoires and vocal ranges (Ofsted, 2012, Ashley, 2013).

Outcomes from this research also suggest that there are slight variations concerning boys' willingness to engage according to social class. The best examples of boys singing occurred in the predominantly middle-class Rural Country (despite some issues of homophobia still surfacing) whereas the greatest discomfort about the relationship between singing and sexual orientation was seen in working-class Suburban Street. Indeed the majority of examples of boys enacting 'macho' representations of masculinity and portraying hostile attitudes towards music were recorded in this school, despite the department's dominantly masculine-gendered philosophy. This suggests that the reticence of many to participate in school singing is so socially embedded, but especially amongst working-class boys, that it will not be remedied easily. Unlike in other curriculum areas, teachers taking part in this study were also keenly aware of the situation and most expressed frustration at their limited ability to effect positive change.

#### *12.42 Girls and KS3 Music*

Outcomes from this study concerning female relationships with KS3 music were mixed; some confirming commonly perceived notions as emergent from other research in this area and others refuting them. Girls predominantly adhered to the expected norms (see section 2.3); appearing acquiescent, co-operative and engaging positively with the demands of the learning requirements, regardless of the activity in question. Consequently (and in contrast to boys) it was difficult to perceive their particular likes and dislikes from classroom observations.

In interviews, girls mostly suggested that they preferred to engage with music via singing and instrumental activities, performing the works of others and composing their own pieces, both individually and in groups. Like boys, and somewhat contradictory to former notions regarding female preferences (Green, 1993, 1996.2010, 1997), they mostly disliked listening and appraising, engaging with classical music and using musical notation, although when forced to do so many demonstrated competency. It is hypothesised that this was potentially the result of greater numbers having had



prior experience of formal instrumental learning<sup>61</sup>. Nevertheless, and as for boys, very musically able girls were not easily identified in classroom observations, indicating that they may likewise play down their skills in order to conform to appropriate expressions of normative femininity ((Ringrose, 2007, Francis et al., 2009, Skelton et al., 2010).

For a substantial number of KS3 girls, the veneer of positive engagement as witnessed in observations, was a sham; many disclosed in discussions that they did not particularly like or enjoy music at all but passively tolerated it as part of their wider schooling. Previous research in music education tells us that this is not a new phenomenon (Lamont et al., 2003) however it seems likely that confusion surrounding girls' current relationship with school music is caused by several inter-related elements: the dominance of the feminine-gendered delineations of conventional forms of musical engagement, particularly singing and classical performance (McClary, 1991, Citron, 1993 Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997); the feminisation of music as a school subject according to historical traditions (Colley et al., 1994, Gilbert & Gilbert, 1998, Arnot et al., 1999, Colley & Comber, 2003b, Paechter, 2000, 2006b, 2009); alongside girls' commonly perceived 'positive' attributes for learning, such as passivity, consideration and conscientiousness (Francis & Skelton, 2001, Jones & Myhill, 2004, Ivinson & Murphy, 2007, Francis et al., 2010, 2012, Ringrose, 2013). In effect the influence of these constructs interrupts our ability to see beyond them in order to understand that a more nuanced picture is required.

In particular, the question as to whether modern-day pedagogies are equally suitable for both sexes is of prime consideration, despite common presumptions that they are gender-neutral in appeal and execution. Indeed data emanating from this study has revealed that many girls, when engaging in popular music group performances, preferred to work in ordered, systematic and discursive modes as opposed to the more physical, haphazard and improvisatory methods exhibited by boys (Abramo, 2011). Meanwhile their musical choices for performance were vastly different to their male counterparts being mostly confined to gentler modes (DeNora, 2000) such as covers of ballads, RnB chart hits and classic pop songs. This suggests that more research into the conventions of female etiquette regarding popular musics seems vital if the dominant classroom pedagogies are not to be perceived by girls as being only about boys' interests and inclinations.

Outcomes from this study also suggest another area of concern; that regarding

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<sup>61</sup> See footnote 55 on page 281 for relevant literature.

the relationship between girls and the burgeoning area of music technology (Armstrong, 2008, 2011). Despite females in this study (mainly from well-resourced Suburban Street) expressing positive attitudes, it was only girls who were observed asking for teacher support or displaying a lack of confidence in their technological skills and resulting musical products (Green, 1997). Meanwhile their teachers appeared unaware of technology's ability to have any detrimental effects, particularly in terms of the more intense and sophisticated level of engagement that KS3 girls believed was required in order for them to access KS4 music. Once again this problem demands the implementation of feminine-gendered pedagogies that can run parallel to those commonly adopted by many, if not all, boys.

In summary, results from this research indicate that a high level of slippage occurs between beliefs about girls' engagement and their visible behaviours; consequently both teachers and male students continue to maintain historical notions about their musical practices that were undoubtedly true in past eras, but may no longer be valid representations of the current situation. Indeed many girls indicated negativity toward those areas of musical engagement with which they have traditionally been associated, such as singing, listening and playing classical music. Meanwhile the dominance of masculine-gendered pedagogies as applied to various key areas of the curriculum have the potential to alienate KS3 girls further, especially regarding their likelihood of engaging with music at examination level.

#### *12.43 KS4 Music*

Data emerging from the focus schools suggests that the majority of boys and girls continue to be deterred from studying music at KS4. There appear to be a variety of reasons for this situation including; the overt feminisation of the subject (as in Seaside Town and Rural Country), putting off many boys; the current re-orientation of the subject towards more a masculine-gendered content (as in Suburban Street), inhibiting many girls' participation; inappropriate pedagogies, resulting in both boys' and girls' alienation from the subject (Green, 1997, 2002a, 2002b, 2005, 2006) (and seen across all three departments); and issues concerning the subject's ability to conflict with both personal identity and those of peers, family and communities<sup>62</sup> (and once again in evidence across all three schools and affecting both sexes).

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<sup>62</sup> See footnote 45 on page 218 for relevant literature.

The national picture concerning uptake of KS4 music is likewise patchy; although outcomes from the Musical Futures programme (Hallam et al., 2011, D'Amore, 2013) indicate that alternative pedagogical strategies can encourage students to opt for KS4 music in far greater numbers than apparent in the focus schools, there has, as of yet, been no provision of data concerning the gender breakdown of these numbers. Recent examination data emanating from all types of music departments (DfE, 2006-2013, Edexcel, 2012, 2013) reveals a gradual decline in girls' participation however, whilst that of boys' remains fairly stable (although it is hypothesised, but not proven that fewer will pursue GCSE and more, alternative courses such as BTEC as they become more widely available).

As explained in section 12.42, there has been limited consideration of how the changing face of music education, particularly its greater technological focus and emphasis upon pupils producing their own music rather than reproducing that of others, might affect girls' engagement at this level. Outcomes from this study suggest that KS4 girls convey more insecurities about these disciplines, expressing a need for both constructive assistance and a parallel confidence boost. It seems that these concerns must be addressed swiftly therefore, if declining female numbers are to be reversed.

Nonetheless it is hypothesised that girls are not necessarily disengaging with musical involvement altogether at KS4 but instead turn to other courses such as GCSE/BTEC Performing Arts which confine their musical involvement to performance alone. Many HoDs in this study failed to either notice or acknowledge these shifts in gendered participation, their perceptions continuing to be influenced by the aforementioned traditions that have surrounded the gendering of school music in the past. Meanwhile, girls' on-going greater examination success (DCFS/DfE, 2003-2013, Edexcel 2011-13), and as exemplified in outcomes from the three focus schools, may also complicate issues further since the increased visibility of female achievement potentially overshadows recognition of their overall decline in participation.

#### *12.44 Implications for Teachers*

Since the focus of this thesis has been upon the gendering of individuals' curriculum and pedagogies, it was initially hypothesised that the relationship between the sex of teachers, and its potential to either positively or negatively affect the behaviours and attainment of girls and boys, was not of primary concern in this research (see sections

2.5 and 2.6). However this study confirms that gender affiliation may be pertinent in some disciplines, especially with respect to pupils' choices concerning particular instruments, alongside the masculine-orientated nature of music technology. It is hypothesised that these domains are so highly gendered across the wider society (see sections 1.33 and 1.34) that they cannot help but function likewise within schools, despite some teachers' attempts to counteract their powerful influences.

Regarding instrumental learning in this study, many HoDs were fully aware of the traditional gendering of practices and keen to interrupt such behavioural patterns, but their intentions to effect change were often thwarted by practicalities. If there are relatively few male flute teachers or female drum teachers then it becomes extremely difficult to hire staff who contravene these dictates in order to provide alternative images for young people. As a consequence, gendered traditions of participation prevail amongst teachers and pupils alike, and the cycle remains unbroken. Likewise the effectiveness of boundary-crossing strategies remains unproven. Indeed several respondents spoke of their attempts to interrupt archetypes (such as by employing male singers to lead vocal work and utilising boy-friendly resources) as having met with some short-term gains but ultimately long-term failure, since gendered norms eventually prevailed.

Meanwhile the acceptance of women as credible instructors in music technology, an area that Armstrong (2008, 2011) suggests is imbued in masculine norms, remains a parallel concern. It appears important, as illustrated in this study, for HoDs to recognise that male and female staff should be seen to contribute equally in all curriculum areas in order that pupils receive a message of gender equity. Therefore where there is reticence about women teaching technology (including from female teachers themselves) the reasons for this need to be explored and addressed. Some may require specialist training, not only in order to execute the required level of practical skills or boost confidence, but also to develop strategies for dealing with males (be they students or other teachers) who challenge or deride their authority in this area. Once again the success of such an approach is not a certainty, as demonstrated by the technologically competent female teacher at Rural Country, who was attracting greater numbers of boys at GCSE but had a negligible influence upon girls. (Other factors such as the feminine-gendered KS3 strategies that she was forced to adopt, may also have exacerbated this situation).

A further outcome of this research relates to the need for educators to promote a

variety of different musical pedagogies, having a range of gendered appeal. This enables learners to pursue their preferred ways of learning according to personal wishes and requirements whilst also encouraging the best possible outcomes for achievement. Although it is potentially taxing for teachers to have to employ various pedagogies simultaneously, I suggest that failure to do will ensure that some students' engagement with KS4 music, but particularly that of girls', will continue to decline.

Perhaps the most important implication emerging from this study is the necessity for music teachers to engage more frequently in serious discussion about gender and music as part of a wider movement to associate links between research and classroom practice. This process should not only be a vital component of initial teacher training but also requires constant re-visitations, during on-going professional development and in localised, departmental arenas too. Indeed the need for the profession to become more research-informed and research-based (Burnard, 2008, Zeserson et al., 2014) seems vital if school music is to possess agency and sustain vibrancy.

Equally important is the facilitation of an on-going dialogue between teachers and pupils (Zeserson et al., 2014), especially regarding female students who appear to be disengaging with the subject more rapidly than boys in the current climate. Ideally conversations should take place in small-scale, single-sex situations as employed in this study, since girls were seen to willingly articulate their likes, dislikes and insecurities in such arenas.

## **12.5 Possibilities for Future Research**

Various outcomes from this study, although hopefully enlightening in themselves, have elicited as many questions as they have answered. In particular the notion that KS4 boys continue to be more highly revered than their female peers, despite a tradition of girls' greater examination success, is an incongruity that requires further exploration (Green 1993, 1996/2010, 1997). I suggest that one pertinent reason for its continuance may be boys' greater opportunities to utilise informal performance- and computer-based practices in examination courses nowadays, thus furthering those historical precedents that define the male as a superior composer, improviser and technologist.

The gradual deterioration of the majority of KS3 pupils' attitudes towards the subject, as exemplified in this inquiry, may also warrant a gender-focused longitudinal study where students' beliefs and behaviours are periodically reviewed, from their

arrival at secondary school until KS4 choices are made in Year 9. Although some research of this nature has already been carried out regarding the success of the Musical Futures model (Hallam et al., 2011), little attention has yet been paid to the differences in gendered beliefs and behaviours that develop across this period.

Meanwhile, wider changes in the gendered patterning of those currently opting at KS4 also warrants further investigation, especially since statistics suggest that girls' participation is falling (DfE, 2009-13) and in the case of BTEC has a much lower starting point than for boys (Edexcel 2012, 2013). Since totals of those taking GCSE (of both sex) also continue to decline, it is BTEC music and its apparent masculine-gendering in many schools (particularly if technologically-orientated), that may provide reasons for this situation and demands further exploration. Similarly a parallel investigation into the gendering of courses such as BTEC in Performing Arts, particularly if run concurrently with KS4 music courses, may be of interest. Although there is only anecdotal evidence emerging from this study, it is hypothesised that some girls gravitate towards these programmes since they allow for instrumental performance opportunities without the necessity of having to engage with the more masculine-gendered aspects of music courses such as composing and using technology.

A further study focusing upon the gendering of individual teachers' pedagogy may also improve our understanding of pupils' reception of the subject. For example it emerged in this study that two (male) teachers at Suburban Street, despite using a common masculine-gendered curriculum, utilised very differently-gendered pedagogies in its execution, one appearing far more feminine-gendered than the other. How these approaches may have affected students' enthusiasm for, and participation in, school music, and ultimately their likelihood of pursuing it at KS4, is of prime significance.

Finally, the transferability of the notion of masculine- and feminine-gendered pedagogies and the remit of this concept to embrace other areas, seems most apposite at this juncture. Although there has already been notable research into the perceived gendering of various aspects of curricula content and their consequential gendered appeal (see section 2.14), there appears to be further scope to explore the power of gendered pedagogies to affect pupils' beliefs and behaviours across all subjects.

## **12.6 Final Conclusions**

The relationship between gender and secondary school music remains complex; radical

changes in the nature of all aspects of music education in the last 25 years appear to have deeply gendered repercussions that remain relatively unperceived by the majority. Although a range of masculinities and femininities exist amongst our students (Halberstam, 1998, Dillabough et al., 2006, Frances, 2010, Paechter, 2006c, 2012) socially-constructed norms concerning how boys and girls both wish, and are expected, to behave in music continue to operate both overtly and covertly. Despite enormous superficial change in the classroom environment, these exert a powerful influence upon both teachers' and young peoples' thinking and behaviours, causing the replication of gendered musical practices that have endured across centuries, to continue unabated, whilst additionally making it difficult to change or challenge pre-existing precedents. Outcomes from this study, suggest that many teachers were failing to appreciate the extent of this situation, arguing that gender issues had less applicability nowadays. Respondents' evidence was usually based upon measurable improvements, such as boys' increased take-up of KS4 music, whilst conversely they failed to notice a corresponding deterioration in girls' participation, potentially because of their greater visibility in terms of superior examination results.

In addition, some teachers, as in Green's study (1993), continued to imply that boys assumed superiority as the secondary years progressed. Although many still praised girls for possessing attributes that made them hard-working, they did not believe that such characteristics could assist females in achieving musical supremacy. Ironically this viewpoint was often stated by respondents, despite their own (and national) data denoting girls' greater overall examination success. This anomaly demonstrates the power of music's overriding masculine delineation to interrupt the coherence of these individuals' thinking. I hypothesise that such viewpoints are likely to proliferate with the growth of such masculine-gendered areas as technology and performing in popular genres, activities that further exploit traditional notions of the male as composer and improviser.

In contrast, this research suggests that secondary pupils appeared acutely aware of gender issues operating in music, particularly at KS3 where the subject was commonly perceived as being more feminine-gendered. This denotes that the sorts of masculine-gendered pedagogical practices that have made KS4 music so popular with boys have the power to transform KS3 music similarly. Nevertheless such approaches, (as exemplified by the Musical Futures programme) are still not being used extensively,

despite their current national expansion,<sup>63</sup> whilst the potential power of such pedagogies to alienate girls and inhibit their involvement with KS4 music remains an issue.

Although some boy-friendly KS3 pedagogies were observed in use in this study (for example in Suburban Street), those males partaking in them still identified many aspects of school music as being 'girly'. This once again suggests that the feminine-gendered delineations that have historically pervaded school music, continue to assert their influence even in masculine-gendered classroom cultures. Meanwhile the intersection between gender and other aspects of large-scale group identity, such as class, further complicate the issue since the lowest identification of music as feminised was expressed in Rural Country, the school with the most middle-class demographic.

Finally it is the somewhat invisible issue of girls' deteriorating engagement with music, and as exemplified in this study, that should now come to the fore in discussions about the current state of school music. Outcomes from this research lead me to speculate that teachers are mostly failing to grasp the level of girls' disengagement since it is frequently masked by their examination success, greater visibility in formal extra-curricular music (in the early KS3 years) alongside their continued co-operation and conformity in the classroom. However girls' reduced participation at KS4 examination level is subtly informing us that they no longer feel as attached to this subject as they once were, or indeed are currently perceived to be, and this situation calls for further research into its causes and potential remedies.

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<sup>63</sup> Zeserson et al. (2014) suggest that according to their on-line survey, 73% of teachers were aware of the Musical Futures programme but only 34% used it regularly.



## APPENDIX A: THE QUESTIONNAIRE

### **Basic Details – Please give information concerning the following:**

1. Name of your school:
2. Local education authority:
3. Your name:
4. Gender:
5. Circle your age category: **Under 30**   **30-39**   **40-49**   **50-59**   **Over 60**
6. Number of years, in total, that have you worked as a music teacher:
7. Number of years that you have worked as an HOD (in any number of schools):
8. Number of years that you have taught in your current school:

### **General Views on Musical Activities and Gender**

**These questions are broad in scope and it is not statistical facts but your personal observations and opinions that I am seeking. For each question:**

- **i) Ring the answer which is closest to your experience.**
- **ii) Briefly outline your opinions as to why this is the case.**

### **In general, throughout the school, which group is the most successful at:**

9. Playing an instrument:
  - i)            **Boys**            **Girls**            **Both equally**
  - ii)            Your reason/s:

10. Singing:

i) **Boys**            **Girls**            **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

11. Composing:

i) **Boys**            **Girls**            **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

12. Listening and appraising:

i)            **Boys**            **Girls**            **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

13. Notation reading and writing:

i)            **Boys**            **Girls**            **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

## General Views on Styles of Music and Gender

Which group, generally speaking prefers, or is more willing, to engage in:

14. Classical Music(s):

i) **Boys**                      **Girls**                      **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

15. Popular Music(s):

i) **Boys**                      **Girls**                      **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

16. Other World Music(s):

i)                      **Boys**                      **Girls**                      **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

17. Jazz Styles:

i)                      **Boys**                      **Girls**                      **Both equally**

ii) Your reason/s:

## **Information about your Music Department**

18. Give the number of music staff, including yourself as follows:

- a) Full-time classroom staff:      **Male:**                              **Female:**  
 b) Part-time classroom staff:      **Male:**                              **Female:**

19. Peripatetic staff: Please state instrument taught and circle sex of the teacher.

If there is more than one teacher please insert appropriate numbers:

- E.g. Instrument:** Electric Guitar                              **Male 1**                              **Female 2**
- a) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 b) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 c) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 d) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 e) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 f) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 g) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 h) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 i) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 j) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 k) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**  
 l) **Instrument:**                              **Male**                              **Female**

20. With regards to the instrumental lessons that are regularly taught please indicate, with a tick, which statement is most applicable. Leave rows empty if instrument are not taught and add the names of any missing ones at the bottom as required.

<b>Instrument</b>	<b>Many more boys play</b>	<b>Slightly more boys play</b>	<b>Equal numbers</b>	<b>Slightly more girls play</b>	<b>Many more girls play</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
Upper Strings						
Lower Strings						
Flute						
Clarinet						
Saxophone(s)						
Oboe/Bassoon						
Trumpet/Horn						
Trombone/Tuba						
Drums						
Other Percussion						
Acoustic Guitar						
Electric/Bass Guitar						
Voice						
Piano/Keyboards						

21. With regards to the extra-curricula activities that regularly take place in your department please indicate with a tick, which statement is most applicable. Leave rows empty if you do not run an activity and add the names of any missing ones where relevant.

<b>Extra-Curricular Activity</b>	<b>Many more boys take part</b>	<b>Slightly more boys take part</b>	<b>Equal numbers</b>	<b>Slightly more girls take part</b>	<b>Many more girls take part</b>	<b>Not applicable</b>
Orchestra(s)						
Choir(s)						
Jazz Band(s)						
Wind Band(s)						
String Ensembles						
W/W Ensembles						
Brass Ensemble						
Steel Pans						
African Drumming						
Samba Band						
Pop/Rock Groups						
Music Theory						
Music Technology						

### **Information about the Pupils in your Music Department**

22. Briefly describe the ethnic make-up of your school, or give approximate percentages of the main ethnic groups:

23. Give approximate overall percentages for numbers in the school of:

a) **Girls:**

b) **Boys:**

c) If the difference is greater than **60: 40**, or **40: 60**, please give possible reasons (e.g. nearby single-sexed school).

24. Does your school offer GCSE Music at **KS4**? (Circle your answer):

a) **Yes**

b) **No**

25. If the answer is yes, give the total number of pupils in your current GCSE group(s) in:

**Year 10:      Boys:                      Girls:**

**Year 11:      Boys:                      Girls:**

26. Does your school offer BTEC Music at **KS4**? (Circle your answer):

a) **Yes**

b) **No**

27. If the answer is yes, give the total number of pupils in your current BTEC group(s) in:

**Year 10:      Boys:                      Girls:**

**Year 11:      Boys:                      Girls:**

28. List any further **KS4** option courses run by your school that include music (e.g. Creative Arts GCSE, Music Technology etc.)



## **Technological Facilities**

33. Circle which category best represents the number of departmental computers available:

a) **None** b) **1** c) **2-4** d) **5-10** e) **11-20** f) **21-30** g) **more than 30**

34. Briefly describe below the technological facilities that you have in your music department in terms of dedicated rooms, hardware and software in use.

35. Finally, if you wish to add any further comments about gender and music which may be of general interest, and/or may give a greater insight into your answers, please feel free to do so below and continue overleaf if required.

This is the end of the questionnaire: thanks, your help has been invaluable.



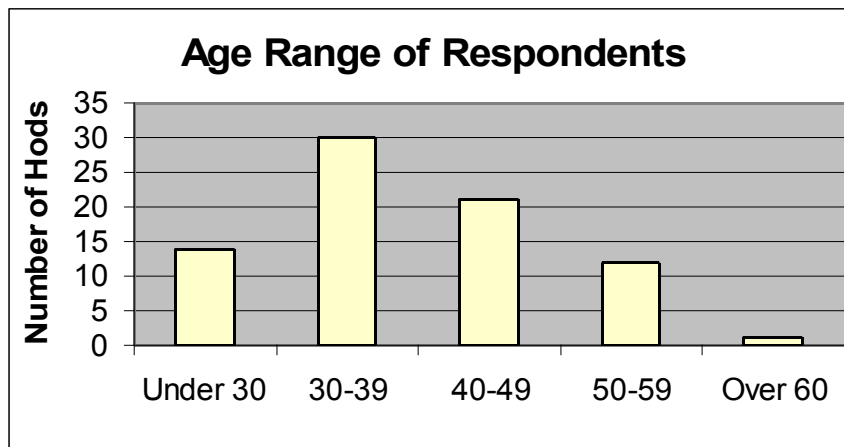
**APPENDIX B: GENERAL QUANTITATIVE DATA FROM THE  
78 MUSIC DEPARTMENTS**

There follows some predominantly graphical information regarding other quantitative data supplied by the 78 respondents that does not directly inform the research question despite being of general interest. It is important to stress that any apparent trends may, or may not, be representative of tendencies across the country, but cannot be regarded as definitive due to the relatively small number of participants.

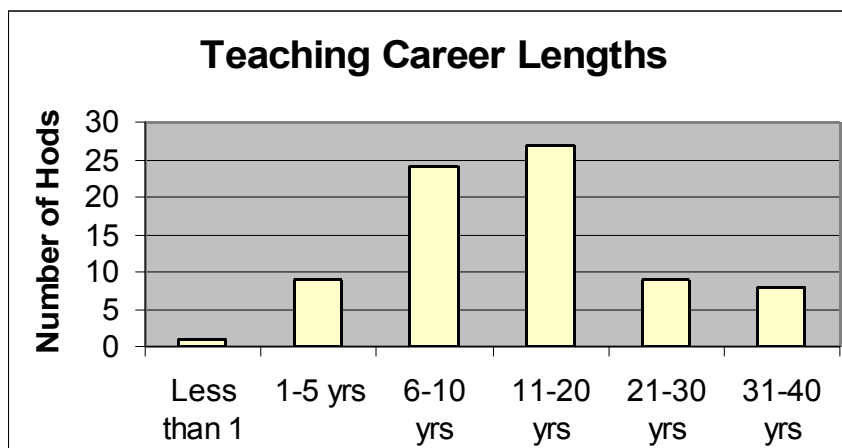
**Women**        43 (Green, 1993 = 35)

**Men**            35 (Green, 1993 = 43)

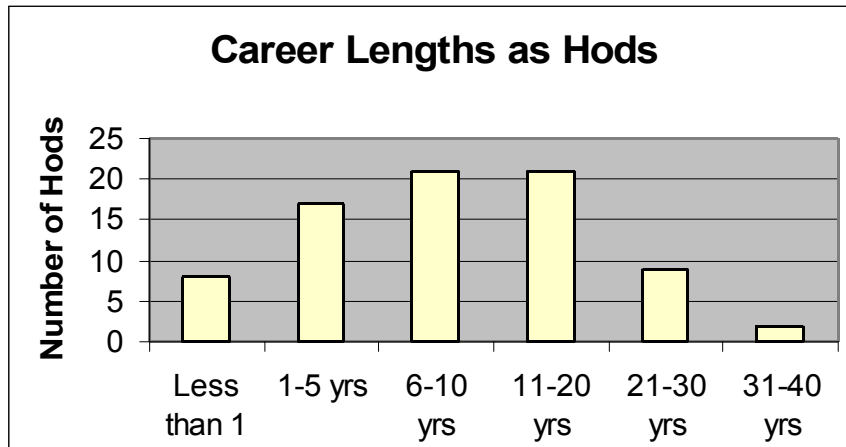
(This exact reversal of numbers is quite accidental!)



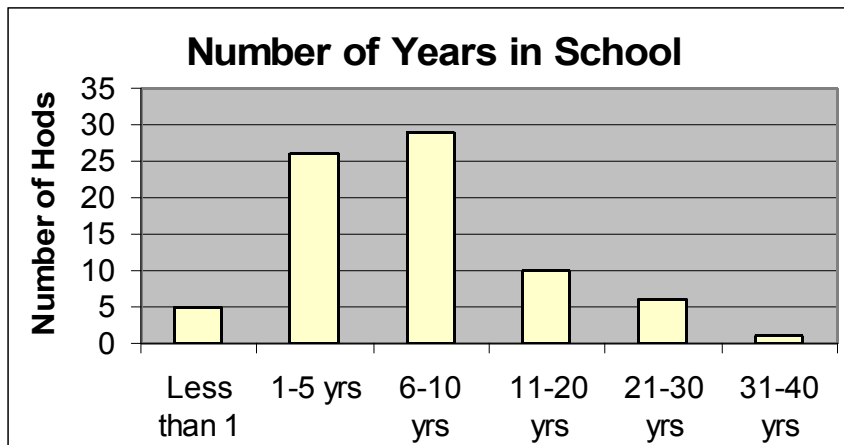
Unsurprisingly the majority of HODs, approximately 4 out of every 5, were aged 30+.



Approximately 7 out of every 8 respondents had taught for 6+ years.



Of the eight respondents having been in a HoD in role for less than a year; three were NQTs (Newly Qualified Teachers) temporarily acting up due to a HoD’s absence and one was in a job-share with another experienced teacher. Nevertheless two thirds had been in a HoD role for a minimum of six years.



60% of respondents had been in their current schools for at least six years.

**Response Return Rates**

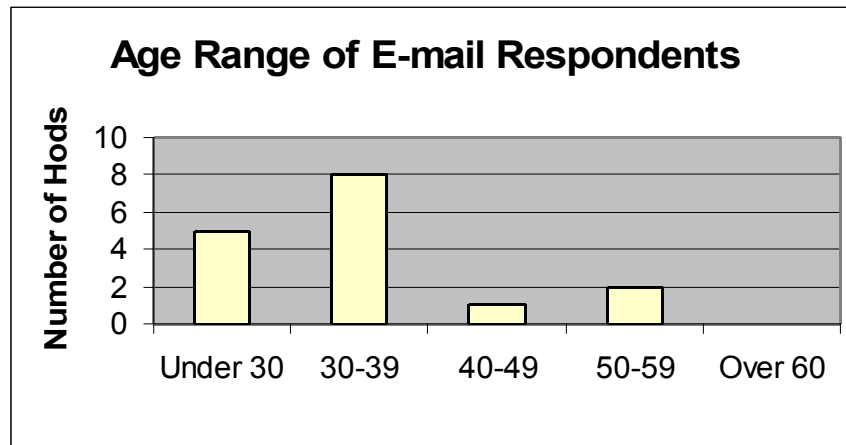
**E-mail** 16 replies - 10% of the total number distributed, were returned.

**Postal** 62 replies - 30% of the total number distributed, were returned.

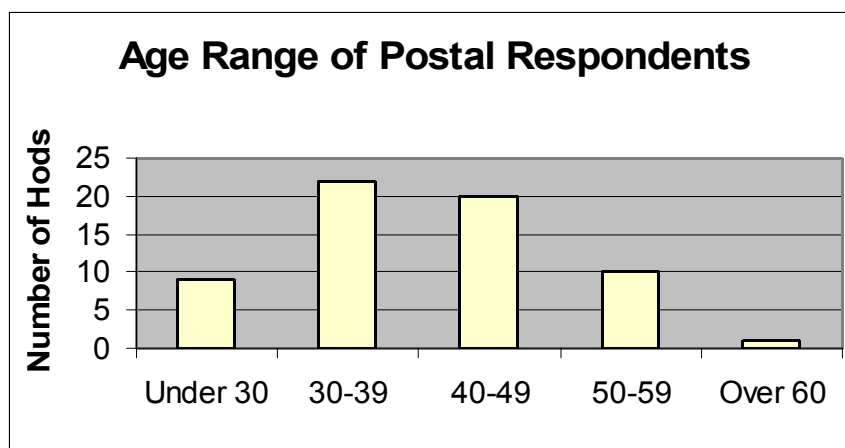
Recipients were contacted by one of two methods:

- By an introductory e-mail that encouraged the respondent to complete an attached on-line version of the survey.
- By a formal introductory letter which was attached to a printed copy of the questionnaire and the necessary information to complete it on-line if preferred.

The expected percentage of returns to a questionnaire can depend on a variety of factors including the nature of the topic, the nature of the respondents, general design (including length, accessibility and speed of completion) and care taken in its implementation and distribution (De Vaus, 1996). The e-mail response to this questionnaire was poor; as a more impersonal form of communication it was certainly easier for the recipient to delete without reading, especially since a link had to be clicked on in order to access the survey itself. The postal version (although requiring greater effort in terms of hand-written answers) was more accessible since it was likely to be opened and read by the addressee, whilst the questionnaire (attached to the introductory letter) was also immediately available to view. Meanwhile the inclusion of a stamped-addressed envelope may have further encouraged its completion and return. Methods of distribution also had some impact in terms of the age range of the respondents:

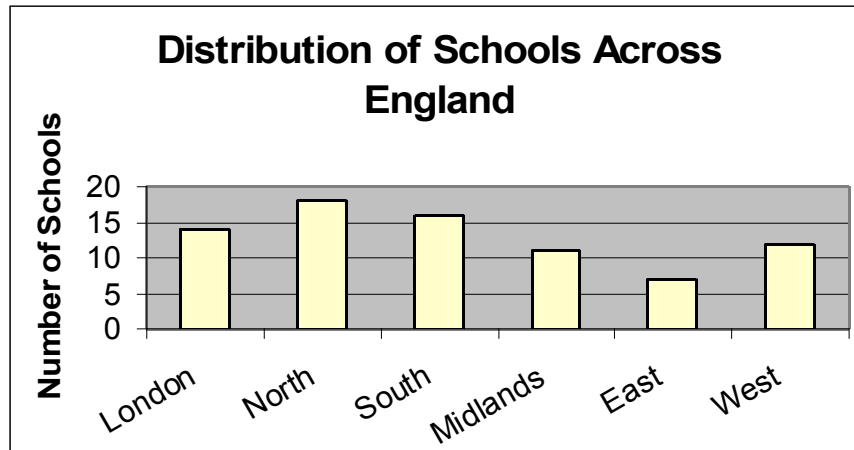


Around 80% of e-mail respondents were under 40 but this group comprised only 50% of the postal responses. This indicates that conventional mail survey methods remain important in the collection of information from older members of the population.

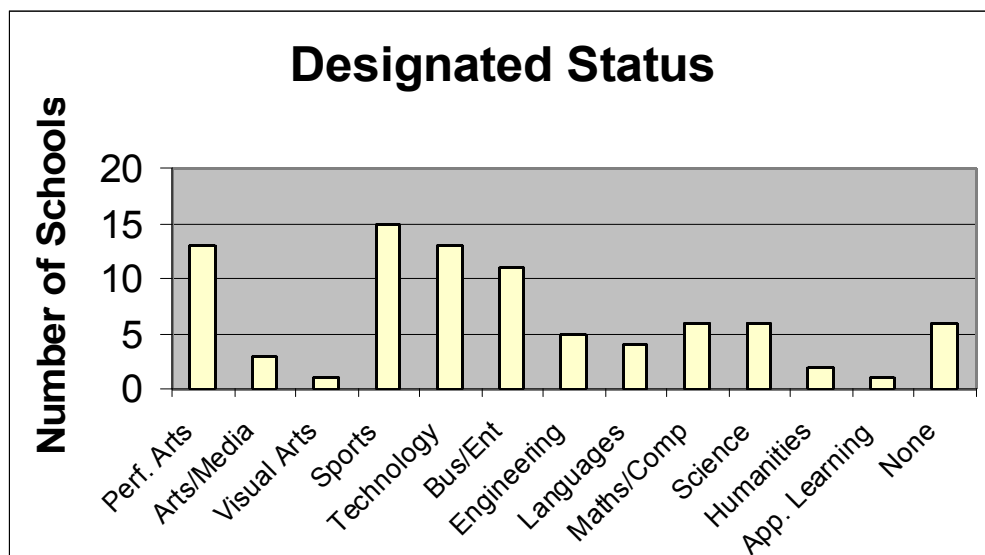


## Profiles of the 78 Schools

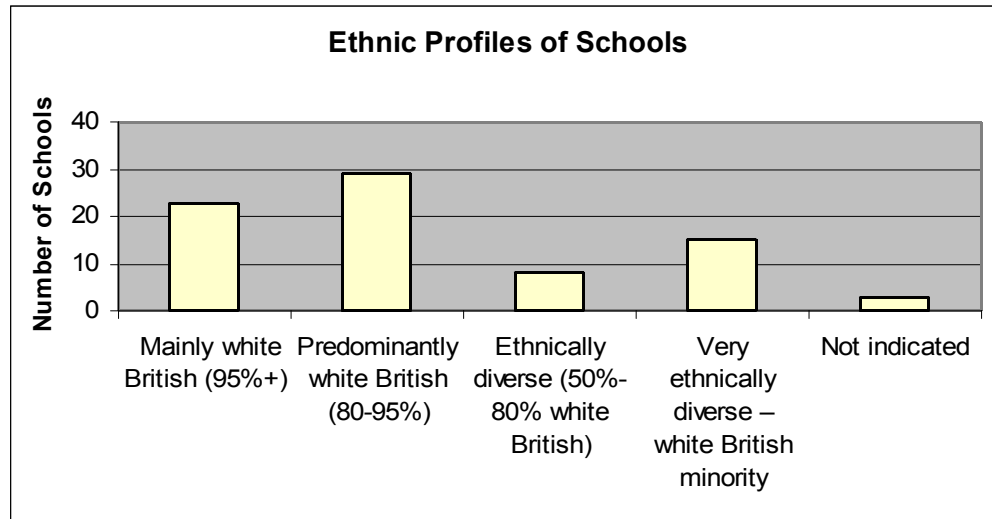
<b>11-16</b>	38
<b>11-18/19</b>	39
<b>Unknown</b>	1



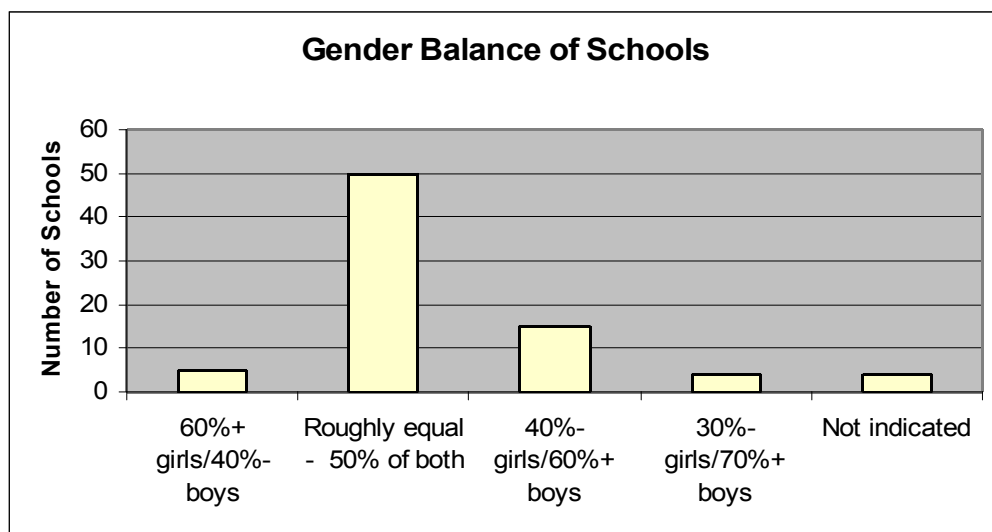
A range of urban, suburban and rural schools were represented in each region.



Out of 78 schools, 11 had designated status in two subject areas.



Of the ‘Very Ethnically Diverse’ schools, five were almost totally Asian in their breakdown, two were 50% Asian, three were 50% Afro-Caribbean, and five had a roughly equal distribution of White European, Asian and Afro-Caribbean students.



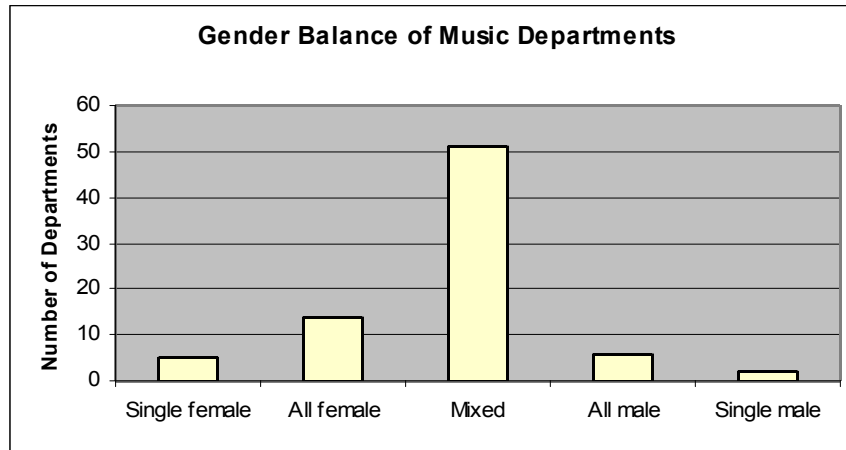
Nine of the schools declaring a predominance of boys on roll indicated that the presence of a local girls’ school adversely affected their gender balance.

### **Profiles of the 78 School Music Departments**

**Total number of male classroom teachers:** 84

**Total number of female classroom teachers:** 105

This creates a ratio of approximately 4: 5



The majority of departments, around two-thirds (51), were mixed however of the remaining third, more than two-thirds of these (20) were all female.

## APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

### For Teachers:

1. Tell me about your own musical identity. (Interviewees could explore any avenues from formal training to informal practices and musical interests.)
2. How has this impacted upon your classroom teaching? (Interviewees were encouraged to explore their teaching styles and curricula/extra-curricular provision in this respect.)
3. What do you think are the most important things about being a music educator?
4. What do you believe that pupils think about music in their KS3 years? What stays the same and what changes across this three year period?
5. How do your KS3 curriculum and teaching strategies reflect this?
6. What sort of pupils are most likely to go on to opt for KS4 music and why?
7. To what extent do boys and girls exhibit different beliefs about, and behaviours in, music in school?

### For KS3 Pupils:

1. How much do you enjoy class music lessons; what do you like doing and/or not like doing in them?
2. Do you have instrumental lessons or take part in any extra-curricular activities within the music department?
3. How likely are you to choose music as a KS4 option and why might that be?
4. What sorts of people are most likely to opt for music at KS4?
5. What do you think about boys/girls in music lessons; do they like the same things and do they behave in the same way?

### For KS4 Pupils:

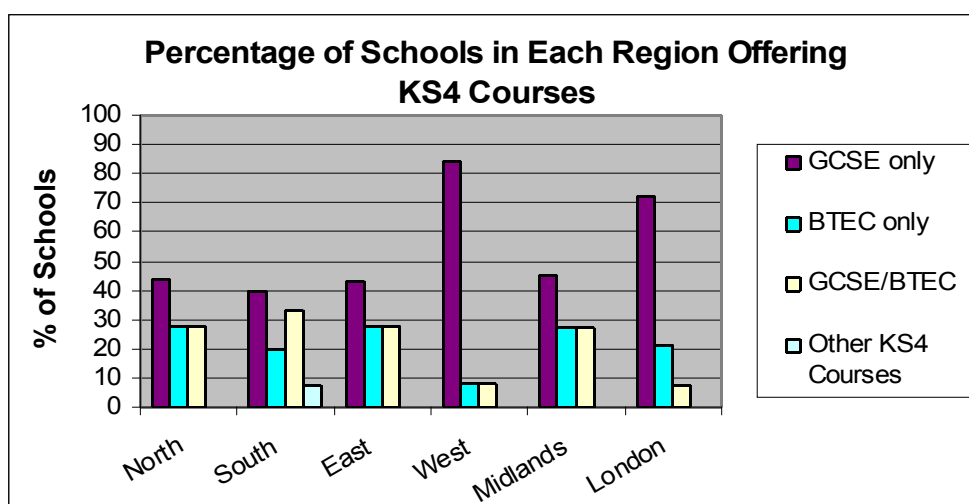
1. What do you enjoy about your KS4 music course?
2. Do you have instrumental lessons or take part in any extra-curricular activities within the music department?
3. What were your reasons for choosing KS4 music?
4. What sorts of people are most likely to opt for music at KS4?
5. What do you think about boys/girls in music lessons; do they like the same things and do they behave in the same way?

## APPENDIX D: FURTHER ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

The 78 questionnaire responses were further analysed in three ways in order to explore whether there were any noticeable variations in outcome in terms of large-scale geographical regions, schools' specialist subject designations, and teacher sex. Please note that some results in these sections have been shown in percentage values rather than numerically. Although not an ideal situation, since there were less than 100 initial respondents, this has been necessary in order that direct and straightforward comparisons can easily be made between various groups.

### i) Exploring the Data in Terms of Geographical Area

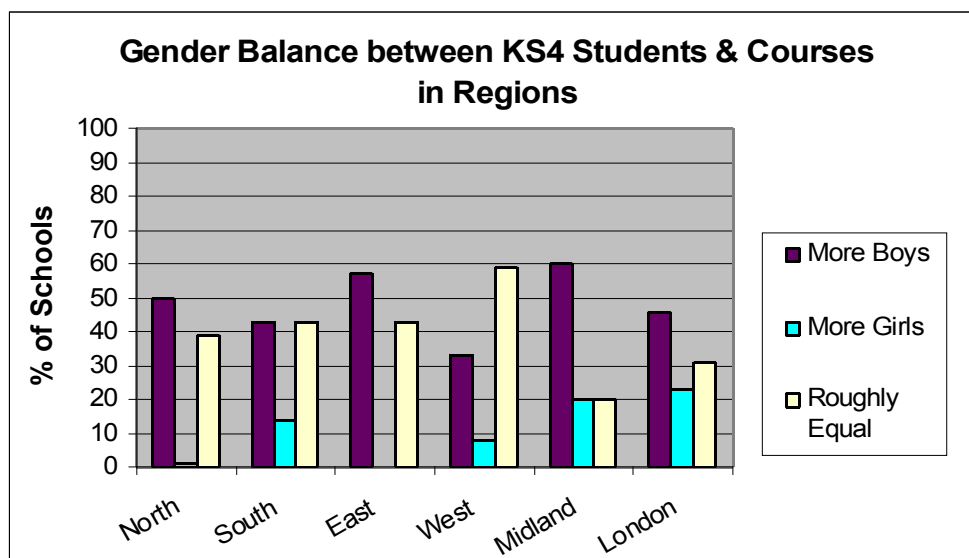
The surveys were separated into six areas for this purpose; the South, North, East, West, Midlands and London (inner and outer). There was little variation apparent across the regions in terms of the gender of classroom and peripatetic music staffing, the gendering of instrumental lessons and extra-curricular activities, the standard of departmental technological facilities or teachers' beliefs concerning curriculum & pedagogy, musical activities and musical styles in relation to gender. However there were some regional differences in terms of the KS4 courses offered.



Although in the North, South, East and Midlands similar proportions of schools offered GCSE, BTEC or both, in London and the West there seemed to be a dominance of GCSE. The 'more boys take music at KS4' was also the most popular statement in all regions (although closely followed by the 'roughly equal' category) except for in the



West, where the roughly equal statement predominated. However, whether there is any significance in the variation in this particular region, is impossible to ascertain.

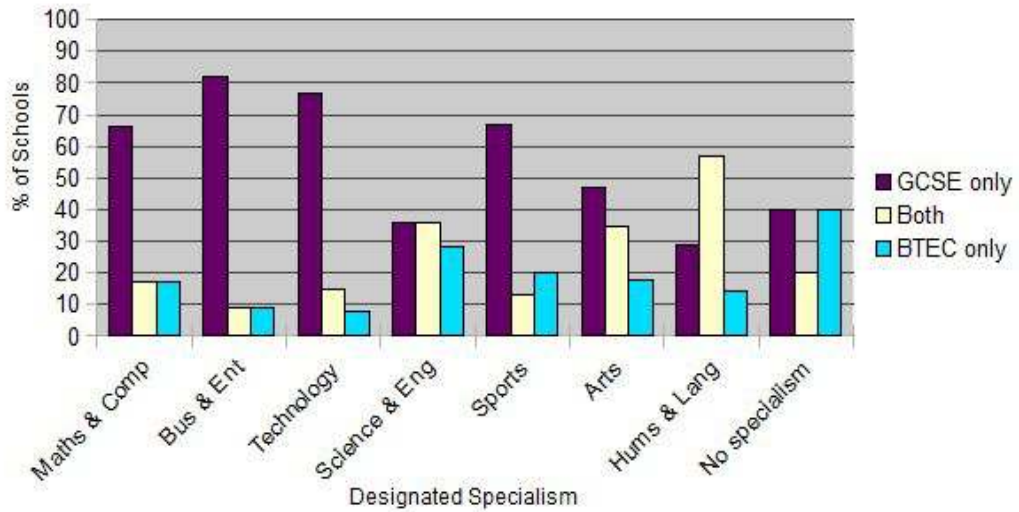


## ii) Exploring the Data in terms of Specialist Status

The responding schools were grouped into eight designated areas: Humanities, Languages, Science & Engineering, Maths & Computing, Business & Enterprise; Technology, Sports, Arts and those with no specialism. Although there was much variation between individual schools, little was apparent across the subject specialisms in terms of the gendering of classroom and peripatetic music staff, the gendering of instrumental lessons & extra-curricular activities, or teachers' beliefs concerning curriculum & pedagogy, musical activities and musical style. However identifiable differences did emerge in three particular areas.

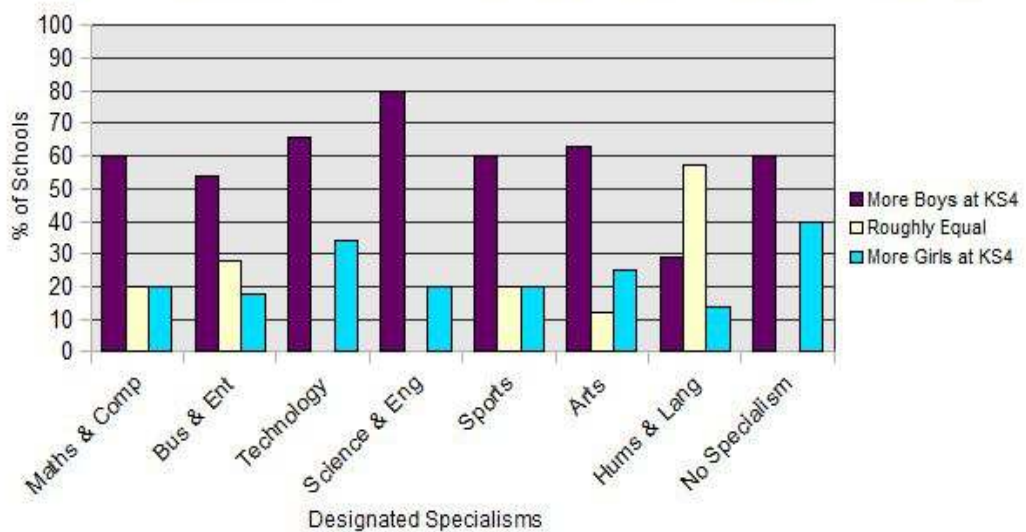
Firstly there were variations in terms of technological provision: perhaps unsurprisingly, facilities were the best in those schools with either Arts or Technology status whilst poorest in those with Sports and Business and Enterprise (however schools with no specialism were also well provided for). Despite the fact that some bucked the trend, schools specialising in the Arts were more likely to have better music facilities than those in Sciences. Differences also emerged concerning the KS4 courses offered in these schools: the GCSE course dominated in schools with Maths & Computing, Business and Enterprise, Technology and Sports status whilst the BTEC course (although not dominant in any group) was better represented in schools with Humanities & Languages, Science and Engineering, Arts and no designated status.

Percentage of Schools in each Subject Specialism and KS4 courses



The ‘more boys take music at KS4’ was the most popular statement in all types of schools except those with Humanities and Languages specialisms where the ‘more girls’ statement predominated, despite all schools in this category indicating that they had roughly equal numbers of boys and girls attending their establishments. It should be noted that outcomes from the science and engineering schools, showing high percentages of the ‘more boys’ option, might be slightly skewed by the fact that three of these schools had very high proportions of boys attending them (60% plus).

Gender Balance between KS4 Students and Schools' Designated Specialisms



### iii) Exploring the Data in Terms of Sex of Teacher

The data were also considered in terms of respondents' sex in order to highlight any noticeable variations. As with the quantitative statistics in Chapter 3, they were analysed in SPSS using Pearson's chi squared test of independence (see section 3.2 for more details about this and **Appendix F** for all data outcomes). The numerical outcomes of male versus female beliefs regarding pupils preferences for engaging in particular musical activities, are outlined in the following table with the results of the test appearing in the final column of the table labelled 'p-value'.

<b>Musical Activity</b>	<b>Pupils' Success when participating</b>	<b>Female Respondents =42</b>	<b>Male Respondents n=35</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Playing an Instrument</b>	Both	29	26	0.54
	Girls	7	6	
	Boys	6	3	
<b>Singing</b>	Both	3	8	0.06
	Girls	38	26	
	Boys	0	1	
	No reply	1	0	
<b>Composing</b>	Both	28	21	0.29
	Girls	2	5	
	Boys	11	9	
	No reply	1	0	
<b>Listening &amp; Appraising</b>	Both	27	26	0.66
	Girls	11	8	
	Boys	2	1	
	No reply	2	0	
<b>Reading/Writing Notation</b>	Both	23	23	0.1
	Girls	19	9	
	Boys	0	1	
	No reply	0	2	

**Table showing relationship between survey respondents' sex and their beliefs about pupils' success when participating in musical activities**

The test shows generally higher p-values for all but one of the criteria, thus suggesting statistically, that there is a similarity between males and females regarding their perceptions about girls' and boys' preferences in playing an instrument, composing,

listening/appraising and using notation. The outcome concerning singing has a far lower p-value although it is extremely close to the p-value ‘cut-off’ point sitting on the cusp between the possibility that the data differences are either down to pure chance or show evidence of some slight variation between the two data sets<sup>64</sup>. Therefore it is not possible to conclude as to whether or not a link exists here. Data concerning girls’ and boys’ willingness to engage in specified musical genres was also analysed using Pearson’s chi squared test and results are shown in the table below. Once again it shows generally higher p-values for all but one of the criteria, thus suggesting that there is no significant statistical difference between males and females regarding their perceptions about girls’ and boys’ willingness to be involved in pop, world musics and jazz. However the outcome concerning classical music is also extremely close to the p-value ‘cut-off’ point therefore it remains impossible to conclude whether a link exists between the two data sets or not.

<b>Musical Genre</b>	<b>Willingness to engage in</b>	<b>Female Respondents n=42</b>	<b>Male Respondents n=35</b>	<b>p-value</b>
<b>Classical</b>	Both	25	27	0.04
	Girls	17	6	
	Boy	0	1	
	No reply	0	1	
<b>Popular</b>	Both	34	33	0.22
	Girls	2	1	
	Boys	5	1	
	No reply	1	0	
<b>World Musics</b>	Both	34	23	0.21
	Girls	3	4	
	Boys	4	7	
	No reply	1	1	
<b>Jazz:</b>	Both	29	26	0.48
	Girls	3	1	
	Boys	6	8	
	No reply	4	0	

**Table showing relationship between survey respondents’ sex and their beliefs about pupils’ willingness to engage in musical genres**

<sup>64</sup> By convention, the cut-off point for a p-value is 0.05; anything below that can be considered a very low probability of there being a connection whilst anything above it is considered a reasonable probability.

**APPENDIX E: CHI TEST OUTCOME FOR PUPILS' REPLIES TO KEY QUESTIONS**

Question 1: Which group is the most successful at playing an instrument?

Q1	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
1991 Actual	43	44	45	78
2009+ Actual	56	13	9	78
Total	99	48	9	156
1991 Expected	49.5	24	4.5	78
2009+ Expected	49.5	24	4.5	78
Total	99	48	9	156

**P-value = 0.00**

Question 2: Which group is the most successful at singing?

Q2	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
1991 Actual	13	64	0	77
2009+ Actual	11	65	1	77
Total	24	129	1	154
1991 Expected	12	64.5	0.5	77
2009+ Expected	12	64.5	0.5	77
Total	24	129	1	154

**P-value = 0.56**

Question 3: Which group is the most successful at composing?

Q3	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
1991 Actual	63	5	10	78
2009+ Actual	50	7	20	77
Total	113	12	30	155
1991 Expected	56.9	6	15.1	78
2009+ Expected	56.1	6	14.9	77
Total	113	12	30	155

**P-value = 0.08**

Question 4: Which group is the most successful at listening & appraising?

Q4	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
1991 Actual	67	11	0	78
2009+ Actual	54	19	3	76
Total	121	30	3	154
1991 Expected	61.3	15.2	1.5	78
2009+ Expected	59.7	14.8	1.5	76
Total	121	30	3	154

**P-value = 0.04**

Question 5: Which group is the most successful at using notation?

<b>Q5</b>	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
<b>1991 Actual</b>	51	27	0	78
<b>2009+ Actual</b>	47	28	1	76
<b>Total</b>	98	55	1	154
<b>1991 Expected</b>	49.6	27.9	0.5	0.5
<b>2009+ Expected</b>	48.4	27.1	0.5	0.5
<b>Total</b>	98	55	1	154

**P-value = 0.56**

Question 6: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in classical music?

<b>Q6</b>	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
<b>1991 Actual</b>	56	19	1	76
<b>2009+ Actual</b>	53	23	1	77
<b>Total</b>	109	42	2	153
<b>1991 Expected</b>	54.1	20.9	1	0.5
<b>2009+ Expected</b>	54.9	21.1	1	0.5
<b>Total</b>	109	42	2	153

**P-value = 0.80**

Question 7: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in pop music?

<b>Q7</b>	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
<b>1991 Actual</b>	64	1	12	77
<b>2009+ Actual</b>	69	2	6	77
<b>Total</b>	133	3	18	154
<b>1991 Expected</b>	66.5	1.5	9	77
<b>2009+ Expected</b>	66.5	1.5	9	77
<b>Total</b>	133	3	18	154

**P-value = 0.28**

Question 8: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in world music?

<b>Q8</b>	Both	Girls	Boys	Total
<b>1991 Actual</b>	65	5	1	71
<b>2009+ Actual</b>	58	7	11	76
<b>Total</b>	123	12	12	147
<b>1991 Expected</b>	59.41	5.8	5.8	5.5
<b>2009+ Expected</b>	63.59	6.2	6.2	5.5
<b>Total</b>	123	12	12	147

**P-value = 0.01**

**APPENDIX F: CHI TEST OUTCOMES FOR COMPARISON BETWEEN  
TEACHERS' SEX AND PUPILS' REPLIES TO KEY QUESTIONS**

Question 1: Which group is the most successful at playing an instrument?

<b>Q1</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	29	7	6
	Male	26	6	3
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	27.5	6.5	4.5
	Male	27.5	6.5	4.5

**P value = 0.54**

Question 2: Which group is the most successful at singing?

<b>Q2</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	3	38	0
	Male	8	26	1
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	5.5	32	0.5
	Male	5.5	32	0.5

**P value = 0.06**

Question 3: Which group is the most successful at composing?

<b>Q3</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	28	2	11
	Male	21	5	9
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>		24.5	3.5	10
		24.5	3.5	10

**P value = 0.29**

Question 4: Which group is the most successful at listening & appraising?

<b>Q4</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	27	11	2
	Male	26	8	1
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	26.5	9.5	1.5
	Male	26.5	9.5	1.5

**P value = 0.66**

Question 5: Which group is the most successful at using notation?

<b>Q5</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	23	19	0
	Male	23	9	1
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	23	14	0.5
	Male	23	14	0.5

**P value = 0.1**

Question 6: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in classical music?

<b>Q6</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	25	17	0
	Male	27	6	1
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	26	11.5	0.5
	Male	26	11.5	0.5

**P value = 0.04**

Question 7: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in pop music?

<b>Q7</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	34	2	5
	Male	33	1	1
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	33.5	1.5	3
	Male	33.5	1.5	3

**P value = 0.22**

Question 8: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in world music?

<b>Q8</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	34	3	4
	Male	23	4	7
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	28.5	3.5	5.5
	Male	28.5	3.5	5.5

**P value = 0.21**

Question 9: Which group prefers, or is more willing, to engage in jazz?

<b>Q9</b>		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Observed</b>	Female	29	3	6
	Male	26	1	8
		Both	Girls	Boys
<b>Expected</b>	Female	27.5	2	7
	Male	27.5	2	7

**P value = 0.48**



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