Lights, Camera, Re/Action: Exploring Transformative Music Engagement through Music Video Production with Inner-city Youth

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ABSTRACT

This research brings together two contemporary ideas in classroom music pedagogy: the use of multimodal composing practices involving collaborative music video production (MPV), and the creation of a learner-centered and youth-led environment for fostering transformative music engagement (TME). The main aim of this research is to explore the learning processes, multimodal composing practices, and transformative engagement of ten young music artists (aged 13-16 years) as they participate in a 12-week music video production (MVP) program. Specifically, the research aims to: 1) identify the practices and learning opportunities that emerge through the MVP program, 2) examine the affordances of multimodal composing practices using MVP, and 3) explore the potential of transformative music engagement as an approach to music pedagogy that is capable of fostering a sense of agency, autonomy, and empowerment among music learners.

To address these aims, the study uses a practical action research design, which affords an opportunity to enrich MVP pedagogies and improve the work of the researcher-teacher as an MVP educator. A qualitative constructivist approach was used to examine the process and emergent outcomes of the MVP program. A multimodal microanalysis was used to analyze the completed music videos and the constant comparative method was used to analyze structured interviews with eight of the participants.

Findings indicate that MVP students are empowered, inspired, and engaged as active agents within the creative collaborations that occur within all stages of music video production. MVP processes and technologies were found to be autonomous, providing music learners with the freedom and control to create music videos that reflect not only each student’s individual voice, but also the beliefs and values of the entire class. The music video as a musical production provides opportunities for students to express their ideas in a unique manner that would not be possible within songwriting or music composition alone. These affordances also create expansive learning opportunities associated with transformative music engagement, with prominent characteristics including agency, autonomy, and empowerment. It is also hoped that the research will forge new ground and further our understanding of the composing practices occurring within collaborative music video production with youth.

Keywords: Music video production, multimodal composing practices, transformative music engagement, multimodal social semiotics, music pedagogy