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Running Head: POPULAR MUSIC AS SOCIALIZING AGENT

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### Abstract

This paper describes two case studies and follow-up, taking place over a three-year period, with an adolescent male diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). At the time of the first case study the 13-year-old subject was mainstreamed in a traditional middle school 7<sup>th</sup> grade setting. The subject was given an MP3 player and told that he could keep it if he asked five boys and five girls his age to tell him what their favorite song was and why they liked it. When writing about the songs, and why peers liked them, the subject identified both musical and social aspects of the songs he felt made them attractive to peers and him. In the second case study the boy, now 15 year-of-age, was given a copy of a novel that included a character with autistic characteristics (but not identified as such in the book). The subject was asked to read the book and pay particular attention to the relationships between the characters. After independently identifying the “autistic” character (prior to finishing the book) he was told that his next task was to create a “Soundtrack” by finding five songs that he thought might improve the characters’ relationship. The subject was asked to write a short paragraph for each song. In the follow-up the subject, aged 16, was given an assignment by his high school literature class teacher to be accomplished “over the summer” for his fall literature class. The writing prompt assigned by the sophomore-year literature teacher was “This I Believe”. The resulting essay was subtitled “There Really Are Hidden Messages in Music”. In the essay the subject refers to his use of popular music to help analyze “life” and “literature” as his “secret weapon”.

Popular music as a socializing agent for an adolescent boy  
with Asperger's syndrome

Autism spectrum disorder (ASD) is defined as a group of developmental brain disorders. The group of disorders has been subdivided and labeled classic autistic, Asperger's, pervasive developmental (PDD-NOS), Rhett's, and childhood disintegrative (CDD). Asperger's syndrome (AS) is popularly described as the mildest disorder on the autism spectrum manifested most often by difficulty sustaining typical social interactions, particularly with peers. Asperger's children can also be physically awkward and as they progress toward young adulthood are often subject to high anxiety and susceptible to depression (National Institute of Mental Health, 2011).

Deficits in skills related to social interactions, and the understanding of human emotions, are not necessarily uncommon in the general population. Educational organizations and public sector agencies recognize the need for teachers to be able to help students develop and refine social skills within school settings. The core mission of the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL, 2011) at the University of Chicago is "...to establish social and emotional learning as an essential part of education." CASEL's website (2011b) defines the basic skills of Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) as including "...recognizing and managing our emotions, developing caring and concern for others, establishing positive relationships, making responsible decisions, and handling challenging situations constructively and ethically." Similar university-based organizations focused specifically on children diagnosed with ASD provide support for parents, educators, and other professionals while facilitating autism research by various university academic departments. One such organization is the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities [CARD] (n.d.) at Florida State University. In a clinical pamphlet on the topic

of Asperger syndrome (CARD, 2003) the organization characterizes the challenges of social interactions as follows:

Many individuals with AS want to develop friendships and interact with their peers, but lack the ability to understand the rules governing social behavior. They have trouble using and interpreting gestures, judging proximity to others, and maintaining eye contact, all of which may impede the development of personal relationships.

The social behavior of persons with AS tends to be naïve and peculiar and movement is likely to be awkward and clumsy. Because of an intense interest in one or two topics, the individual with Asperger syndrome may talk at people instead of to people, disregarding the listener's interest or attention.

Although individuals with AS may make efforts to socially interact with others, their unusual manner may leave many people not knowing how to respond. The person with Asperger syndrome may be left misunderstood and isolated.

Private sector organizations focused on the clinical treatment of children and adolescents with ASD are helping add to the research and developing new strategies for clinical practice. Gutstein (2009) suggests that a lack of “dynamic intelligence” in individuals with ASD results in difficulty functioning in a complex world of social relationships. “Among other things, dynamic intelligence consists of being able to rapidly analyze, appraise, evaluate, adapt, collaborate, compromise, and innovate.” (p. 175) These responses are a part of regular cognitive and behavioral reactions during daily social intercourse and like most abilities are likely normally distributed throughout the population. However, children and adults with ASD find them much more challenging. Relationship Development Intervention (RDI), as outlined by Gutstein (2009), includes training parents to function as social guides for their children and young adults with ASD. RDIconnect (2012) is a private organization that trains and supports regionally based clinicians to work with both patients and their parents to develop “biopsychosocial management” skills for the purpose of monitoring and teaching social skills. Gradually increasing the child's

capacity for dynamic intelligence is seen as a long term process carried out over the lifetime of the parent/child relationship. An initial clinical study of the program, following 16 children over a five-year period, recorded measurable positive results (Gutstein, Burgess, & Montford, 2007) with the techniques.

Music, and the natural human attraction to music, is a potentially useful tool for engaging and guiding socioemotional learning. Music therapists have worked with children diagnosed with autism in clinical settings since the earliest days of the discipline (Reschke-Hernández, 2011). In recent years research resulting from that practice has become more common. Whipple (2004) undertook a meta-analysis of 10 studies in which various common music therapy interventions were used successfully in a variety clinical psychology and clinical music therapy settings. Nineteen more studies related to this topic area were identified but did not meet the criteria for meta-analysis. All 29 studies identified by Whipple showed positive results for uses of music with subjects on the autism spectrum. Benefits from those cited in the meta-analysis for children and adolescents with autism included increases in appropriate social behaviors, attention to tasks, communicative acts, interactions with others and decreases inappropriate behaviors or anxiety. She concluded that music "...appears to be so powerful a tool with this population that regardless of its purpose or how it is used...it achieves positive effects." (p. 103) Walworth (2007) describes a variety of music activities, regularly used by music therapists, which naturally include important aspects of social communication skills.

Music education programs for students on the autism spectrum are often focused on enhancing the quality of those students' lives through music and giving future educators hands-on experiences with students on the spectrum. One such program is housed at the Boston Conservatory (n.d.). This program is designed to pair ASD students with conservatory students

for private music lessons. Hillier, Greher, Poto, & Dougherty (2012) developed and implemented an eight-week program of music sessions which included hands-on music activities such as listening, identifying techniques or instruments, composing, and improvising. The primary project included the making of an original short film with an original music soundtrack. One of the primary goals was to facilitate social interactions and the curricular aims included acceptance by peers and personal accomplishment. In this pilot study the group members had all been diagnosed with some form of ASD. Even though most of the socialization goals were within group the final week of the program required participants to share examples of the movie trailer with friends and family, with a stated goal of "...Identifying potential social connections which could continue outside the program." (Hillier et al, p. 207) Pre- and Post-program measures showed improvements in self-esteem and attitudes toward peers as well as decreases in trait anxiety. While the authors noted that the improvement in the parents' ratings of peer relationships increased much less than participants' ratings, overall the increased ratings were significant (Hillier et al, 2012).

Socioemotional learning and music are frequently paired in music classrooms and appropriate social skills or emotional responses are common targets for music teachers in formal classroom settings (Jacobi, 2012). ASD students in traditional school classrooms can integrate successfully if the teacher is aware, patient, and proactive. Palm (2012) suggests five steps to facilitate the process. Use visual cues in addition to auditory instructions, scaffold instruction using the individual student's area of strength, remove potentially distracting cues from the environment, make the schedule as predictable as possible, and as often as possible find some positive aspect in the students' responses to build success. Byrnes, Arthur, & Fredrickson (2013) cite a variety of strategies for successfully integrating ASD students into a traditional secondary

school music performance setting. These include preferential placement within the music performance setting, use of teacher-directed peer interaction to promote inclusive episodes, teacher monitoring of ASD student-initiated peer interactions, and music selection and pedagogy choices focused toward the success of the ASD student. These are combined with regular teacher-parent exchanges. Byrnes et al, suggest the first step is for teachers and parents to take advantage of resources to educate themselves and to agree on initial plans and subsequent adjustments. This can be part of a formal Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a more informal parent/teacher interaction with regular monitoring. Foster, Rude, & Grannan (2012) suggest that preparing parents to advocate for their child, helping them work to control their own emotional responses to the challenges, and facilitating the development of advocacy networks should be part of the overall educational process.

Whipple (2004) suggests that one of the important goals of research into uses of music and ASD is to "...assess the efficacy of specific applications of music in the treatment of children and adolescents with autism." (p. 103) The case studies outlined in the current project were not developed to use popular music to either prompt or reward specific social behaviors. Instead the intent of the authors was to try to create platforms for positive social interactions that often occur naturally among adolescents related to popular music listening. In addition it was thought that a certain level of autonomy, or independence, related to regular use of popular music could enhance and facilitate emotional understanding of relationships. This included facilitating regular access to popular music by utilizing a digital music player (MP3 player). Various studies have shown that MP3 players could be used successfully by children with various developmental disabilities to facilitate communication as well as for music listening (Hammond, Whatley, Ayres, & Gast, 2010; Mancil, Lorah, & Whitby, 2016).



*Case Study # 1*

The subject of the first case study (Fredrickson, Madsen, & Fredrickson, 2010) was a 13-year-old male formally diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome in a mainstreamed seventh-grade middle school setting. The subject was not as successful in school academically as he had been in elementary school, had trouble making friends, and experienced numerous instances of bullying by other students during sixth grade, his first year in middle school. The subject showed signs of depression and had been referred by his pediatrician to a counselor and prescribed antidepressants. Incidents of bullying at school had been formally reported prompting special monitoring by the middle school building assistant principal for discipline. Behavioral observations and subject reports indicated the subject had little success sustaining "small talk" and when not in class was most often seen alone (eating lunch, in the school hallway between classes, after school, etc.).

Researchers and parents observed no subject involvement with age-appropriate popular music. The subject had been a regular member of a children's choir for several years and enjoyed listening to children's music CDs. The subject was given an MP3 player and told that they could keep it if they completed some tasks. The subject was instructed to ask five boys and five girls of his choosing at his school to tell him what their favorite song was and why they liked it. After collecting the names of the songs, and the basic information about why his peers liked them, he was given a gift card and instructed to find the various pieces of music on-line and download them to the MP3 player. His final task was to listen to the music and write a paragraph about each piece which explained why his peers said they liked those tunes as well as what about the music or lyrics he thought caused them to like it (Appendix A).

When writing about the songs, and why peers liked them, the subject identified both musical and social aspects of the music and lyrics. Themes included sexuality, emotions, forbidden behaviors (sex, profanity, drugs), and various human interactions including differences between how boys and girls may perceive and react. In addition the subject wrote about musical aspects of the songs that he felt made them attractive to peers and to him. When asked about whether or not he was aware of this music before the project and how he liked the music the subject indicated that this was not the type of music he listened to, but that he had enjoyed coming to know some of these songs and thought he would continue to listen to some of them. He also stated that he felt that he was “friends” with some of the peers with whom he had interacted during the project. Behavioral observation confirmed that the subject occasionally talked to some other students during times in between classes and regularly ate at a table with several other students during lunch, although his verbal and physical interactions with these peers still placed him somewhat on the periphery of the group.

### *Case Study # 2*

In the next case study (Fredrickson, Madsen, & Fredrickson, 2011) the boy, now age 15 and a freshman in high school, was given a copy of the novel “Dear John” (Sparks, 2006). Among a number of themes about human relationships the book included a father who exhibits behaviors that could be thought to be autistic. In the book the father is portrayed as being emotionally distant from his son (John). The subject was asked to read the book and pay particular attention to the parts of the text that described the relationships between the various characters in the story. After reading a few chapters the boy asked if the father in the book had Autism, and when a researcher confirmed that it was possible the subject asked what his next assignment would be after reading the book. He was told that his next task was to create a

“soundtrack” by finding five songs that he thought the son in the book might ask his father to listen to in order to improve their relationship. The subject was also asked to write a short paragraph for each song explaining why it might make their relationship better (Appendix B).

The five songs selected by the subject were “The First Time” by Simpson & Jackson, “Collision of Worlds” by Williams, “The Distance” by Hot Chelle Rae, “The Rainbow Connection” by Ascher & Williams, and “The Man on the Left” by Metivier (Appendix B). Since the previous project the subject had collected a variety of other popular songs using his MP3 player. He had begun listening to music on a daily basis from a variety of sources including various styles of radio stations, on-line sources, and his MP3 player. It is interesting to note that several of the songs originally considered for inclusion in the current list were discovered in the previous project and had been listened to regularly during the intervening time, and that one of the songs chosen for this project (“Collision of Worlds”) did come from the original survey.

Following the current project the subject reported having regular conversations about music and other topics with peers, most of whom he identified as “friends”. However his insights about the characters in the book show that understanding others remained a significant challenge. In examining the written paragraphs from the songs chosen for the soundtrack the subject was much more easily able to identify the point of view of the father character. He had difficulty understanding why the son had to work so hard to connect with his father since “the father is the one who is autistic, so it should be easier for the son to understand what to do” (Appendix B).

#### *Follow-up*

In the summer between the subject’s sophomore and junior year’s in high school, just prior to turning seventeen and more than a year after participating in case Study #2, the subject was given an assignment by his high school literature class teacher to be done “over the summer”

for his fall literature class. The writing prompt assigned by the sophomore-year literature teacher was “This I Believe”. The resulting essay (Appendix C) subtitled “There Really Are Hidden Messages in Music” was written without parental or researcher input and only shared with parents after it was completed and turned in. The title and text of the essay were shared with parents who asked the boy’s permission to share it with the researchers from the previous case study projects.

In the essay the subject refers to his use of popular music to help analyze “life” and “literature” as his “secret weapon”. He specifically cites the use of one recorded song (*Rainbow Connection*), first encountered in Case Study #1, to relate to a character in a previously written book report (*Dear John*, from Case Study #2) as an example. This essay was not originally written with prompts from the researchers or the parents, so this apparent connection was made by the subject. Later in the essay he refers to “...transfers made between life, literature, and music...” which utilizes vocabulary that may have been heard at home, but seems to have been chosen independently in this case. The subject writes about how connections can be made not just by interpreting lyrics, but also listening to the music itself. “Through a song’s melody, tone, tempo, and volume, multiple visions and translations can and will evolve.” He also notes “...that making transfers in music is the ultimate catalyst to writing poetry, which humbly gives itself back and transforms into new music.” He concludes the essay by writing “I believe that an important part of understanding life lies in seeing the multiple meanings of music, which come simply from listening to it and letting it into your life.”

These thoughts, and the phrases that express them, were found noteworthy by the parents and researchers in that they were not typical examples of conversations in the daily home environment (even though both parents are musicians and educators) or in the interactions from

the first two case studies. The parents did not recall having talked with the boy in detail about the assignment, prior to seeing the finished text, in any way except for scheduling purposes (when is your summer assignment due, are you making progress on your summer assignment, etc.). In addition conversations with the subject and behavioral observations confirmed that he was having positive social interactions within an identifiable group at school with increased regularity.

### Conclusions

Teaching for independence is seen by some as the primary goal of education. Duke (2012) suggests strongly that it is "...next to impossible to learn something deeply if you're simply following instructions." (p. 41) But to develop independence of thought and action is a complex long-term goal. Sometimes we can structure learning environments and create assessments that give students opportunities to practice, and for us to measure or find evidence of, independent thought and action. The challenge for teachers (and parents) is being involved but staying far enough out of the way to ultimately let the student find the solution. Duke characterizes this as creating "strategic confusions." Another important aspect may be to help the student stay involved with the problem long enough for something to happen.

In the current series of case studies, undertaken over several years, there is some evidence to suggest that the subject found ways to use popular music to help interact with others in socially productive ways and also describe how that music is utilized to help him understand both himself and others. While this was in the minds of the researchers at the outset the actual outcome, and the forms it took, were not specifically anticipated. All behavioral observations made by the researchers, and interpretations of actions and written words made by both parents and researchers, are subjective but exhibited high reliability. The authors feel that there is enough

evidence available to suggest that further study of the use of popular music to facilitate socioemotional interactions for adolescent children with formal diagnoses of Autism spectrum disorder and/or Asperger's syndrome is warranted.

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## Appendix A

## Survey of songs

## BOYS Song #1 - B.Y.O.B. by Systems of a Down

I think that the boy I surveyed, said that this song was his favorite song because it is very expressive and based on what I've observed, I think middle school students (boys and girls) particularly like expressive songs because it allows them to musically express themselves. Now, there are many different reasons why this particular expressive song is fond enjoyable by my friend, one of them being that it is a very loud song and I believe that students have a lot of energy and noise inside them but because of school and other similar environments, they are often forced to contain their excitement and so my friend might like this song because it allows them to let their expressions go loose in a way. Another reason could be that they especially because there is a lot of craziness with the percussion and guitar and they might especially like to hear the craziness in the music because there is never a time when the music is off key or anything like that so it seems very professional and encouraging and therefore it's really inspiring and just makes them feel really good and is really energizing and just really makes the people who listen to it feel really good because the music is just so cool and crazy. Not only that, but there is also a lot of random nonsense, which most people go after at every opportunity because not only does it sound amazingly cool, but with the rhythm mixed in, it can take over your mind and make you blend in with it in a way.

## BOYS Song #2 - Clint Eastwood by Gorillaz

I very much enjoyed this song and can easily see why it was enjoyable to the person who chose it. I wouldn't say it's a jazz song-it was defined as "Alternative"-but it does include some small parts that include sad saxophone playing and a lot of piano, so one might easily mistake it for jazz. That in and of itself is really cool jazz being what it is in my opinion, and I haven't even mentioned the drum part. It starts off loud at the very beginning but suddenly shrinks while continuously keeping the rhythm steady and adjusting to the speed at which the words are rapped. It's also pretty cool because the words are almost all random nonsense, well not the words themselves, they aren't made up words, but they are sentences that don't really relate to each other or the chorus which despite the slight melancholy music has a very optimistic and bright. The random nonsense sentences are interesting because you don't know what to expect which is kind of funny despite the slight sadness and the high speed of the rhythm, which probably makes it even funnier. It also might inspire the listener in the sense of rhythm because it is very steady but still speeds up without any break in the beat. All in all, it is very energetic and random.

## BOYS Song #3 - Co-Defendant by Plies

I would say the guy who picked this song picked it because it's a sort of tough guy song and while it doesn't have very much humor I can see a few reasons why it would be popular. First of

all it's genre hip-hop/rap is mildly popular with at least half of today's culture especially with the element of clever words in rhyme with not exactly any music but the practice and usage of rhythm which many people find a fun way to pass the time and also enjoy the drumming element and weird noises that come with that. Now the song itself is about a whole massive jumble of things but basically talks about independence and coolness which teenagers particularly seventh-graders enjoy and at the same time the basic idea of that is subtle and therefore keeps the song from seeming tacky which I think is very ingenious and the fact that there is also stuff that people might not agree with such as some choice cuss words, bad decisions and such stays cool and is not exactly done much with is another element of creepiness and coolness that sort of preserves the song to what it is which doesn't hurt anybody but is just an interesting bunch of ideas just put into a sort of really good jamming song that allows guys to exercise their energy.

#### BOYS Song #4 - Let it Be by The Beatles

The Beatles, one of the world's most popular 20<sup>th</sup> century rock & roll groups. I think this song was chosen because first of all, from what I've observed, rock is probably the most popular genre among guys. Now, when most teenage boys listen to a Beatles song might rarely might they actually be thinking about the words and the message, which in this case is about hope and living life to the fullest, which guys might not think about every minute of the day, but when they're telling jokes and really enjoying life it puts them in a good mood which is rare and special in life. As for why they would like the music (an explanation that is about the music element, it is rock, which is widely popular with guys, and one super cool thing is that most rock songs have kind of a sad message in them, and there seems to normally have to be one in order for it to match the music and sound really crazy and yet musical with low and high notes simultaneously coming together or the loudness of the music makes you feel good, but you have to pay the price with a distressing message. That's what's really cool about this particular song; it has a message about hope that makes you feel good, and it still sounds awesome. I think as really fascinating aspect is that on the piano there are parts where it sounds sad, and some that aren't so much, and you can never tell when it is going to change it just kind of creeps up on you. Also, the element of a steady beat from the drums and symbols, and the music does have a high volume but it doesn't change anything but the awesomeness of the music. Plus it's also a Beatles song and you can ask almost any guy who likes rock and they'll most likely agree that the Beatles were the greatest musical group of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

#### BOYS Song #5 - Shattered (Turn the Car Around) by O.A.R.

I think whoever picked this as their favorite song chose it because it has a nice melody that makes the song really happy and at the same time sort of sad and it makes the song really catchy and is kind of an energetic song. It is also a rock song and has really good rhythm that makes you also feel really good, and despite it being an energetic song it can make a person feel really happy because of the change in moods but the overall happiness of the melody. People might also like this song because it might make them think of people they love and care about and make them realize that love can be difficult and can be sad at times but that it makes life very interesting.

### GIRLS Song #1 - Ain't I by Yung L.A.

I can recognize this song as very masculine because it talks about tough guy and cool guy kind of stuff like muscles and cars and uh...FOOD and about just chilling and being rough and for some teenagers I know self-centeredness. Now all this sort of makes it a goofing off sort of song, which is good but it's extremely odd because it is a song you would probably expect a guy to enjoy more than a girl because you'd think a girl would like a song that had love in it or something, but this was a girl's favorite. So in my mind I believe that the girl who chose it chose it for a couple of reasons: both the type of music (hip-hop/rap is a really popular) and the words because although it may have been about self-centeredness and most girls don't like, she may have enjoyed it because it might remind her about boys that she might like who may be somewhat self-centered. Also, she might feel kind of mature. As for the music, it is dark and creepy which might attract them to the bravery and self-confidence of boys the girl may like. Guys and girls who are attracted to each other based on what I know about popular culture really like the same kind of music. So that's one thing and another idea is that it's an active song and most guys and girls feel pretty much the same about action.

### GIRLS Song #2 - Beautiful by Akon, Colby O'Douis & Kardinal Offishall

This song is a Rhythm & Blues/Soul song, which I have found to be extremely popular among seventh-grade girls. This song particularly emphasizes the blues and soul probably soul even more particularly because it's song from a guy's point of view about the beauty of a particular girl and about loving this girl will make him devoted to her and girls like to be noticed. However I believe that the listener's favorite element are the metaphors such as "Like the sun you brighten my day" because it kind of shows the guys feelings for her all of which makes a girl have her turn in falling under the guy's spell. I think the listener likes those things about the song either because it makes them feel good to know that there are some people they know that make her feel like something special or that there will one day be a person who does and that will truly accept her for what she is, many girls enjoy sentimental things particularly when they are set to music. Speaking of which, the listener probably liked the music of the song because it is kind of fast and at the same time cheery in a way that you aren't exactly sure if the guy is being entirely sincere but there is something overwhelmingly positive about the melody that makes you sort of trust the words and although it isn't exactly classified as melancholy there is a lot of emotion put into the words and implying that the girl that the guy is singing about i0s what he wants more than anything and would be heartbroken if he didn't. So there are mixed emotions naturally because it is blues, but a sort of cheerful blues

### GIRLS Song #3 - Radar by Britney Spears

One thing I think the person liked about this song (being adolescent and all) is the element of sexuality because it is a song that talks about stalking guys, you can just tell that by listening to the refrain when it mentions the thing about a guy not knowing he's on someone's mind and being watched. All this is very interesting and might you think about girls who like to flirt with guys and aren't afraid to sort of scare a guy, which of course comes naturally to guys but is the

sort of thing girls don't often do and its very interesting to hear that on T.V. or in a song. As Orson Wells once said "I don't say we all ought to misbehave, but we ought to look as if we could." The music is also very interesting, being somewhat dark and sexual. Sex is what many believe to be what the soul longs for, which is why I believe my friend liked this song because, although most seventh grade girls try to avoid conversation about sex as much as possible, it is in their nature as both human beings and adolescents to enjoy sexual related music. The flirtatious element, meaning the creepiness and darkness is interesting because it is also mixed with higher notes making it kind of half creepy and flirtatious, half desperate. There are a lot of hints of going after a particular person, stalking them, and not letting them go which many people perceive as hostile, which many people think is even more flirtatious and sexual. I am beginning to both drift off and repeat things I've already said, so I will conclude by saying that this song was picked probably because it's sexual and flirtatious which natural for human beings especially adolescents, it is dark and creepy music which is interesting and sexy, but it isn't completely hostile because of the higher notes making the listener feel good about the music, the creepy hormonal message, and themselves.

#### GIRLS Song #4 - Trust by Keyshia Cole

Another R&B/Soul song, and although everyone knows this, I think it is only appropriate to mention the fact that R&B stands for rhythm and blues, and in many songs, but particularly this one, the blues is highlighted. This song is in a nutshell is about a girl who knows a guy who has been through rough situations and he isn't sure that he can rely on her to not let him down and the words are her message to him telling him to trust her and to convince him that she loves him and wouldn't do anything to him. There is a lot of sadness because she feels really sorry for him and because getting someone to trust you is very difficult and emotional. I think this song was chosen because it might make girls and some guys think of how they love is hard but if you really love someone it is possible to make compromises in all sorts of relationships and might make them appreciate any relationship they might have and reminds them that if a man and a woman stick together and put faith in each other they will have something special between them as they grow old no matter what happens...or something like that anyway. The music is very happy but not extremely jumpy but peaceful and there are some parts where the music is bittersweet with the blues element, and I think the person enjoyed this song because the music is relaxing and some parts particularly in the chorus show the relationship of sex with love. Take into account that it is also (I believe) a song from a musical, songs of which are always very catchy and therefore just grab you.

#### GIRLS Song #5 - Turnin' Me On by Keri Hilson & Lil Wayne

This is a rather confusing song I think with a lot of sex and different instruments some brass and some modern instruments that might be some kind of Orff instrument or something like that. It is very creepy music and is very melancholy, very low pitched and occasionally has short tuba parts and has many note slides, they the notes don't slide up as high as it does in pop, but there are a lot of slides nevertheless, and this makes it kind of catchy, especially with the sound of the backup girl singers making long "oohs" and "ahs" between verses. Another fascinating element is that the woman who sings it sing the words in the verses extremely fast and that is something

that you don't hear every day without the woman losing her breath and that just might make you think. The song is somewhat confusing since in the first half of a verse it tells that the woman in the song is loving the guy and saying he's doing everything right and is "Turning [her] on", but then she gets upset because he's starting to feel too comfortable with her and/or insulting her in some way and is "turning [her] off". There is also a bit of profanity and sex involved which most teenagers feel comfortable with and even enjoy being adolescent. There are also some phrases I don't understand but could probably guess at. All in all, it is a very interesting song.

## Appendix B

## DEAR JOHN – SOUNDTRACK

## Song #1- The First Time by The Script

Although this song is probably more of a song a guy might sing about and/or to a girl, I think this song might be wicr for this situation, because John is trying to reconnect with his dad. The first of a few reasons why this song particularly seemed to fit was because when John's talking to Savannah and also when he's just thinking about his relationship with his dad he says how he and his dad practically don't know each other despite the fact that his dad did raise him for 18 years and they still live together which sort of goes well with the line in this song that goes "We're smiling but we're close to tears even after all these years, we just now got the feeling that we're meeting for the first time." Also, even though the line is "We're gonna start by drinking cheap bottles of wine, sit talking up all night, saying things we haven't for a while", and John and his dad don't really hang out a whole lot of time together John does see to it that he makes a really good effort to cook steaks and set out a nice table outside for dinner for both of them, having breakfast together and sharing things like introducing his dad to Savannah, and little things so that they bond with each other that you would do to slowly ease in to getting to know each other better. Anyway, this is a good song that John could have his dad listen to let him know that although he is his own person that he is sorry for being hard on him in the past but that he really wants to have a connection as father and son

## Song #2- Collision of Worlds by Robbie Williams and Brad Paisley

This song is somewhat a humorous choice because it mainly is about two or more people who come from different countries and the entire song is a bunch of British and American contrasts, but i thought that despite the humor it delivered a very strong and essential message for john to deliver to his dad. The message is that despite the fact that they do not share characteristics such as passion for coins or making small talk or forcing things to happen (in short they kind of have extreme differences in nature) they are very close in that the meals they share (and not so much the meals as company) and little things that make a relationship however, hold together. One line in the song goes "We can't pretend to live on different planets, you and me", which shows that although it might not be completely obvious, the love and the meaning behind their relationship. The only part of the song that just might be confusing for John's dad might be the line that goes "It's too late and you can't stop it now", but he might be able to realize that what it means is that not that it was an unfortunate mistake but as something that was better for both him and John despite all the ups and downs they went through and that having a friend to guide you through those rough spots, and that despite John's dad's quiet nature, they were just the right people to help each other out in those situations.

## Song #3- The Distance by Hot Chelle Rae

This song would be about John's explanation as to how even though there are some parts of his nature that causes him to be separated from his dad he feels bad about that and really wants to

reconnect with his dad. One line in particular grabbed my attention and it is “It’s like your living with a ghost, someone you can’t hold” and that fits not only because John is hardly ever there and they hardly ever talk to each other but also because John used to really enjoy talking about coins and doing so was the main that held them together, but when John blew up about it they really didn’t have anything (visibly) solid to hold onto. Also, the line “My heart won’t give up easily” might make his dad understand that there is something inside his son besides guilt that makes him want to get to know his dad better and show that he cares.

#### Song #4- The Rainbow Connection by Kermit the Frog

This song talks about how things are not really as they seem and yet at the same time says how by covering things with stories, it clouds the natural beauty of things. Love between any two people is interesting when they don’t really see eye to eye but this song is convenient for the explanation of John’s and his dad’s love because their love is very foggy, but ironically it is extremely simple because although they don’t really know how to communicate with each other there is still something that unites them and they just have to find it as they share more about themselves, but it is clearly and definitely there because of the line “Someday we’ll find it, the rainbow connection” (the rainbow connection being the love and the reason why there is love, which for now is unclear). The final verse talks about how the singer heard voices in their sleep and how they’ve “Heard it too many times to ignore it” and that there’s “something [they’re] supposed to be” which could explain that being his dad’s son was what he needed to be by his heart, or how he was called to join the army, which made him a better person and made him want to start reconnection with his dad.

#### Song #5- The Man On The Left by Cross Winds

This song has a biblical reference about how God who is love asked two men to follow him and how one man followed him but did not come back the next day and how the other man rejected the lord and was very stubborn about but came to him the very next day and repented and followed Jesus forever afterward. John’s dad is not God, but let us assume him to have the same sort of position as in this song and that the man who was stubborn about not needing assistance is John when he blows off steam about his dad always going on about coins and now that he’s been away for a while, he wants to reconstruct the relationship. The most important thing to understand is that his dad didn’t force him to rebuild their relationship, and John didn’t get lonely, but he tried to come back to his dad because he was his son and because he wanted to. This is probably most important because John probably really needs his dad to know that he truly cares about him and still wants to be with him, and was sorry that he hurt his dad’s memories that they had of each other.



## Appendix C

This I Believe:  
There Really Are Hidden Messages in Music

I believe in analyzing the glory of life and the conflicts in literature through all types of popular music. I consider it my secret weapon in every book report and critical thinking essay because I never know what it may lead to. I believe that one of the most demanding, exciting, and rewarding aspects of making such connections lies in justifying connections that are not static in their similarities or that require elaborate explanation in order to make sense. By this, I mean songs whose music or lyrics would not be thought of immediately to relate to such predicaments and conclusions.

My favorite example is when, to analyze a story for a book report of a son who tries to sustain his relationship with his humble and sorrowful father, I used key elements from Kermit the Frog's "Rainbow Connection." I chose this song because, although the son describes scenic background that his father introduced him to, it seems clear that his father took in the before-mentioned backgrounds differently and less vividly than his son did. So by referring to the rainbow in the song being "only an illusion," I demonstrated how the son might "translate" to his dad that while the rainbow, (like backgrounds they observed) may have meant something else to each of them, the simplicity of its being, just like love, would unite them.

However, I believe in finding connections from a song not only in its lyrics, but also in its music. Through a song's melody, tone, tempo, and volume, multiple visions and translations can and will evolve. This is why Disney's *Fantasia* was such a colossal project. For example, I believe that any activity in life really worth describing can be expressed by the rhythm and volume of "The Sorcerer's Apprentice." This is seen clearly in the subtlety and slight stirring of ambition, too small at first to be recognized. Suddenly, overpowering arousal of the senses and spirit capture's one's entire being. Eventually adjusting, the mind settles but gently winks at the climbing towards corruption, seen as clearly as day in the engagement of calm relaxed suspense. Yet the explosion (if executed correctly) comes as a greater ambush than imagined. The shock simmers down and then, when one isn't looking, it begins to ascend to the ultimate trigger and with its release finishes off its feed on the action.

People see this climb, explosion, and descent when they write, hunt, cook, and imagine. Furthermore, I believe that making transfers in music is the ultimate catalyst to writing poetry, which humbly gives itself back and transforms into new music.

I'm not even sure why I take pleasure in making such transfers between life, literature, and music, but I believe it's like a special power that anybody willing enough can obtain (for proof check out [songfacts.com](http://songfacts.com)). I believe that an important part of understanding life lies in seeing the multiple meanings of music, which come simply from listening to it and letting it into your life.