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The Social Intervention Function of Chinese Pop Music Performance and Its Macro Sociological Analysis

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Abstract

Pop music is a product of human consciousness and widely exists in all known human cultures. Music is not a necessity for human survival, why is it so important to humans? For a long time, social connections have been considered an important function of music and a major factor influencing the evolution of human musicality. The recent hypothesis of music social connection provides a framework for understanding the biological and cultural evolution of music. It suggests that music can coordinate emotions, behaviors, and ideological perspectives among individuals, strengthen intimate relationships between individuals, and thus enhance social cohesion. Pro social behavior is a manifestation of human social connections, which refers to the beneficial behavior of individuals towards others, groups, and society, such as helping behavior. Although studies have shown that listening to prosocial songs and their associated prosocial emotions can promote individual prosocial behavior, it remains unclear whether the music itself and its corresponding emotional experiences are sufficient to influence prosocial behavior after excluding the influence of lyrics. In addition, although some studies suggest that prosocial behavior is related to factors such as individual psychological theory ability and cognitive ability, the mediating effect of music on prosocial behavior through psychological theory ability and cognitive ability has not been verified. Therefore, based on the classic two-dimensional emotional model, this study systematically examines whether music and its induced emotional experiences affect individual prosocial behavior decisions, and further explores the mediating role of psychological theory and cognitive ability.

Keywords: pop music; emotional experience; social behavior; cultural identity; community identity; educational function.

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Introduction

Music plays a social connecting role in different cultures, and is widely used in social interaction and collective activities in various cultures. For example, choirs and concerts are social activities in different cultures that promote interpersonal communication and social connections through music. Celebrations and ceremonies in society are usually accompanied by music (Fang, 2024). These celebrations not only enhance the connections between individuals, but also emphasize the shared values of culture and communities. For example, marches, mourning, religion, gatherings, etc. are closely related to social connections. Music is used in different cultures to express emotions, trigger resonance, and promote interpersonal relationships and social emotions. Music is often associated with cultural identity and community identity. Music styles, instruments, songs, and dances from different cultures are cultural symbols (Liu, 2021). Through these musical elements, individuals can establish their own cultural identity and strengthen social connections. And music is a cross-cultural nonverbal communication tool that can overcome language barriers. Help people establish connections between different cultures. In addition, music performance usually requires collaboration, and collaborative performance among different musicians can promote collaboration and team building, which is common in various cultures. The above evidence indicates that music plays a certain role in promoting social connections in human society across various cultural backgrounds (Prior, 2008).

The educational function of musical works mainly refers to the beneficial effects of a musical art activity on various aspects of human morality and education. This is also a topic that many artists and educators are very willing to discuss and discuss. Some people have once said, “In the stage of socialist moral development, only through education can they achieve beauty (including the beauty of music and other arts). These are the needs for us to cultivate and improve our personality.” Music works can help people gradually form healthy and happy character and spirit, and gradually form a true, beautiful, and elegant outlook on life, which is directly determined by the artistic and spiritual material values that the music industry should have. Beauty is the spiritual essence of a work of art, which aims to express the creator’s true feelings and experiences of beauty in things, others, society, and life. So, when people first come into contact with and appreciate this beautiful work of art, they are naturally moved by a sincere emotion, inspired by its enthusiasm, and thus promote themselves to gradually form excellent behavioral habits in life (Yu, 2022). At an important moment of the arrival of the new century, the great Chinese people have entered a brand new era of socialist history. It is precisely the touching melody of “Entering the New Era” that inspires “hardworking and kind Chinese people to speak in a new era with vigor and spirit”. Social intervention, as a common behavior, can cause excluded individuals to feel pain, sadness, anger, and low satisfaction, as well as threaten their sense of belonging, self-esteem, control, and meaningful presence. The

social premonition caused by social intervention is a negative emotion that is not conducive to establishing good interpersonal relationships and can also lead to different behavioral responses.

Music is widely present in human culture and integrates with people's lives. It is combined with acoustic elements such as loudness, speed, and mode to input information through the auditory system and convey emotions. Music, as a way of regulating emotions, is closely related to both positive and negative emotions. Numerous studies have confirmed that music can generate different emotions in individuals by altering acoustic elements. In terms of music speed, fast music can generate positive emotions, while slow music can generate negative emotions; In terms of musical modes, due to the composition of different levels, major music is brighter and more likely to stimulate positive emotions, while minor music is softer and more likely to stimulate negative emotions (Luo et al. 2022). In recent years, research has found that individuals are more inclined to be exposed to loud music environments, and further research has found that different levels of music produce different emotions. Researchers have found through questionnaire surveys that high pitched music is believed to generate positive emotions, but there is currently limited experimental research on music loudness.

Literature review

In the 20th century, many theorists elaborated on the sociality of music from a sociological perspective. Adorno was an early link between music and its sociality. He believes that art originates from society, and music has a "saving effect" on society. The social impact of music is indirectly achieved through changing people's consciousness. Music contains imaginative spiritual content, which can provide people with spiritual comfort and hope that cannot be found in the real world. This psychological compensation is precisely the so-called "saving effect" of music. He firmly believes that music can help change society. Some scholars have attempted to apply Marxist principles to music issues. In his view, the so-called "beautiful" music is music that is harmonious, bright, and full of vitality. Beauty is closely related to morality, and beauty is always moral and good for humanity. Music provides moral education by bringing people closer to beauty. Another equally important Marxist music theorist, En Mayer, believed that great musicians can use music to point the way forward, liberate humanity from contradictory social relationships, and achieve freedom. Therefore, music has a positive social connotation (Şengönül, 2022).

In recent years, the relationship between music and social cognition has received attention from psychologists. For example, some studies on how music affects social relationships have pointed out that when performing collectively in a musical environment, each person's actions are synchronized with the rhythm characteristics of the music, with a time scale of up to milliseconds. This time

frame increases the predictability of other people's actions, such as dancing, creating resonance among group members. In addition, by listening to the same music, people share common contextual information, establish common attention, and ultimately establish a way of communication.

In terms of research status, scholars first focused on the status and role of Chinese pop music performance in social and cultural context. They generally believe that popular music, as a form of popular culture, has a wide range of dissemination and influence, can deeply penetrate people's hearts, and has an important intervention effect on social culture. For example, some popular music works, through their unique artistic style and profound thematic content, transmit positive energy, stimulate people's patriotism and social responsibility, and have a positive impact on social morality and values. Meanwhile, scholars have also explored the relationship between popular music performance and social change. They believe that with the continuous development of society, people's aesthetic concepts and lifestyles are also constantly changing. Pop music performance, as a cultural form that reflects the characteristics of the times, is also constantly adapting and leading these changes. For example, in the early stages of reform and opening up, popular music performance, with its unique artistic style and strong sense of the times, became a symbol of people's pursuit of freedom and personal liberation, and had a profound impact on social culture.

In terms of macro sociological analysis, scholars have applied sociological theories and methods to conduct in-depth analysis of Chinese pop music performance. They analyzed factors such as social roles, social relationships, and social structures in popular music performances, revealing the social mechanisms and laws behind them. For example, some scholars have found through empirical research that the celebrity effect and fan culture in popular music performances not only reflect the consumerism and entertainment trends in contemporary society, but also reveal people's psychological needs and behavioral characteristics in the pursuit of self-identity and social status. Some researchers speculate that the reason why music can have an impact on prosocial behavior may be because music promotes positive emotional experiences in participants. Some scholars have explored the impact of different emotional types of music on prosocial behavior decision-making. In his experiment, participants were randomly assigned to two sets of conditions, under which they would listen to either happy or unhappy music (Grady, 2022). Each participant sat alone on an experimental table, separated from the other participants by a partition to prevent bystanders from interfering with the decision-making results of prosocial behavior. The participants used voluntary donation tasks to measure their prosocial behavior decisions. The experimenter introduces a public welfare project to the participants during the experiment, and they will receive a sum of money at the beginning of the experiment, which they can allocate according to their own wishes. It was found that participants in the Happy Music group would donate more money. This indicates that happy music may promote people's pro social behavior decision-making. However, the

experiment did not measure the emotional experience of the participants after listening to music, so further exploration is needed on how emotional music affects prosocial behavior decisions (Yang and Welch, 2023).

As is well known, music is an art of emotions that has a direct and subtle impact on human emotional experiences. Based on Russell's two-dimensional emotional model, emotions consist of two basic dimensions: valence and arousal. Among them, valence mainly refers to the degree of emotional pleasure, while arousal mainly refers to the sense of emotional stimulation. For example, for basic emotional types, "happy" emotions have the characteristics of high pleasure and high arousal, while "sad" emotions have the characteristics of low pleasure and low arousal. Valence and arousal can form four quadrants of emotions, and almost all basic and special emotions can be covered by these four quadrants composed of these two dimensions. Therefore, many studies have measured the impact of music on individual emotional experiences and examined the impact of music on prosocial emotions (such as empathy levels) (Davies, 2024).

Research Content and Hypotheses

Based on the above research content, we propose three experimental hypotheses:

- Assumption 1: Compared to low pitched music, high pitched music has a moderating effect on social exclusion. Loud music can better enhance negative emotions caused by social exclusion and reduce social exclusion, changing individual behavior after experiencing exclusion.
- Assumption 2: Compared to slow music, fast music has a moderating effect on social exclusion. Fast music can enhance negative emotions caused by social exclusion and reduce social exclusion, changing individual behavior after experiencing exclusion.
- Assumption 3: Compared to minor music, major music has a moderating effect on social exclusion. Major music can enhance negative emotions caused by social exclusion and reduce social exclusion, changing individual behavior after experiencing exclusion.

In recent years, a large amount of research on social exclusion has focused on exploring the impact and influencing factors of individuals' emotions and behaviors after experiencing social exclusion, with less research on how to regulate existing emotions and behaviors. Music is often used as a means of arousing emotions, providing individuals with different emotional experiences through loudness, speed, and mode, and can significantly regulate negative emotions. Therefore, based on the existing relationship between music loudness and social exclusion, this study can not only explore the relationship between music speed and mode and social exclusion, but also further explore whether music loudness, speed, and mode will affect behavior, thereby strengthening the relationship between music

and social exclusion. Moreover, this study changes the experimental research method and verifies the effectiveness of previous research results by using images to induce emotions, providing empirical evidence for the impact of music on social exclusion.

Forty students from Yunnan Normal University were selected to participate in this experiment. Ten participants with over half a year of music experience were excluded, and 30 valid participants (6 males and 24 females) were selected. The average age of the participants was 24.43 years old (standard deviation of 1.591). All participants voluntarily participated in the experiment, and their visual acuity or corrected visual acuity were normal and they all filled out an informed consent form. After the experiment, they were truthfully informed of the experiment purpose and given a certain gift.

The emotional arousal material is selected from the Asian Youth Social Acceptance/Exclusion Image Library (ISIEA) developed by Shenzhen University in 2021. The actors in this material library are college students, and the filming location is on the university campus. The photo library is located on the campus of Shenzhen University, covering the main scenes of college students living and studying on campus. It includes 104 outdoor pictures (grass, playground, path, hallway, etc.) and 60 indoor pictures (classrooms, library, cafeteria, etc.). The social acceptance/exclusion image library has a total of 164 images, including three types of social interaction scenarios: social acceptance (51), social exclusion (60), and neutral control (53). Social exclusion images are rated as the most negative and exclusive, and trigger the most negative feelings. As shown in Figure 3.1. This study selected 111 images of social acceptance and social exclusion from the image library, all of which were standardized to be 10.16cm high and 6.77cm wide, with pixels of 100 per inch.

Figure 1. Social acceptance and social exclusion

This study does not explore the impact of lyrical content on social exclusion. Therefore, in order to eliminate the impact of music with different types of lyrical content, all music in this study is non lyrical music.

To eliminate the interference of other factors, the materials were also evaluated as follows: Familiarity assessment. 39 graduate students were selected to rate the familiarity of the selected materials on a scale of 0-7 from low to high. In the end, the selected music materials were rated below 4 points, indicating a lower level of familiarity. Emotional assessment: The selected materials are rated on a scale of 0-7 from low to high, and one neutral emotional song is ultimately selected: Song of Spring (M=4.33).

1) Self adjusting volume stage. Before the experiment begins, participants will adjust their volume according to the instructions "Please adjust the volume to the maximum volume you can withstand" or "Please adjust the volume to the minimum volume you can hear". The monosyllabic music heard during the tuning process is different from the experimental music.

2) Emotional pre-test. Before inducing social exclusion emotions, participants undergo an emotional pre-test. At this stage, we first present the guiding message on the screen: Welcome to participate in the social exclusion experiment. There is no right or wrong answer in this experiment, and you can answer based on your true state. Then, the participants were presented with a 9-point rating of emotional valence and emotional arousal in the Self Emotional Assessment Scale, as well as a 9-point rating of social exclusion. The pre-test of emotions was recorded as emotion measurement time point 1.

3) Image induced. After completing the pre-test of emotional valence, emotional arousal, and social exclusion, the participants continued to complete the image induction of social exclusion or social acceptance. Each participant was required to complete the induction task under two situational conditions. After each image induction, the subjects only need to receive one adjustment of high or low loudness music, so a total of four image induction sessions are required. Divide the four image elicitations into two rounds, with each round consisting of one social exclusion scenario and one social acceptance scenario. The interaction between social exclusion and social acceptance is induced four times. Image induction was used to induce social exclusion and social acceptance in the ISIEA image library. The experiment is divided into two blocks, each presenting only one block. Each block randomly selects 20 images from the corresponding image library that are not put back. The image presentation time for each trial is 5 seconds. After viewing the images, participants need to imagine

themselves as one of them and evaluate the intensity of rejection felt in each image from 0 to 8 points (0 points represents the lowest intensity of rejection, 8 points represents the highest intensity of rejection). The evaluation time is unlimited, and there is a 3 second rest time (empty screen) after the emotional rating is completed. The entire process of image presentation was conducted in a music free environment, and to avoid external interference, all experiments were conducted in the laboratory.

4) After completing the image inspiration, the emotional valence, emotional arousal, and social exclusion of the subjects were reevaluated based on ratings. If the image elicited viewing was a social exclusion image, the subjects also needed to undergo a behavioral tendency test after experiencing social exclusion. If the image elicited viewing was a social acceptance image, there was no need to answer. Record the emotional post test as the emotional measurement time point 2.

5) Music regulation stage. After completing the emotional post test, the participants were given 1 minute of high or low loudness music, with each adjustment presenting only one loudness of music.

Results and Discussion

The results of the subjects' perception of rejection of image stimuli under different conditions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Results of Image Exclusion Perception Score under Different Conditions in Experiment 1 (M ± SD)

Type	Loud music	Low loudness music
Social exclusion images	5.6	5.9
Social acceptance pictures	1.3	1.6

Using emotional valence as the dependent variable, paired sample t-test was used to test the effectiveness of image induced emotions at time points 1 and 2 of emotion measurement.

The results showed that under the condition of social exclusion in the first round of viewing, the emotional valence at time point 1 of emotion measurement (6.200 ± 1.243) was higher than that at time point 2 of emotion measurement (3.333 ± 1.348), t (29=7.059, $p<0.001$).

Under the condition of observing social acceptance in the first round, the emotional valence at emotion measurement time point 1 (5.833 ± 1.020) was lower than the emotional valence at emotion measurement time point 2 (6.867 ± 1.907), t (29=-2.947, p=0.006).

Under the condition of observing social exclusion in the second round, the emotional valence at emotion measurement time point 1 (5.267 ± 1.497) was higher than the emotional valence at emotion measurement time point 2 (2.800 ± 1.324), t (29=6.656, p<0.001).

Consistent with Experiment 1, before conducting mediation analysis, this experiment first analyzed music familiarity and individual music preferences. The music materials selected for this experiment are from Experiment 1, all of which are Western classical music. This experiment intentionally excluded works that were well-known to the public when selecting music, and adjusted the speed of the music. Considering that most of the participants recruited for the experiment have not received professional music training, it is expected that the participants in this experiment will not be familiar with the music selected for the experiment. Indeed, the results of the post test showed that all participants in the familiarity assessment process indicated that they were not familiar with all music and were unable to accurately report the specific title and composer of the music.

The participants have different preferences for major and minor music. Through paired sample t-test, it was found that there was a significant difference in preference between subjects for major and minor music (t (23)=3.461, p<0.05). Compared to minor music (M=3.98, SD=0.97), participants preferred listening to major music (M=4.83, SD=0.94).

Based on the above results, this experiment takes music as the independent variable, the rating of willingness to help as the dependent variable, psychological theory and memory intensity as mediating variables, and music preference as covariate, and incorporates them into the mediation model. The results indicate that psychological theory cannot mediate the relationship between music pleasure and prosocial willingness (direct effect. SE=0.127, 95% CI [-0.35, 0.15]; indirect effect, B=0.104, SE=0.105, 95% CI [-0.07, 0.36]). The results of both direct and indirect effects show that 0 is within the 95% confidence interval, so the theory of mind does not have a mediating effect.

Similarly, memory intensity cannot mediate the relationship between music and the types of emotions it evokes and prosocial intentions (direct effect, SE=0.165, 95% CI [-0.47, 0.19], indirect effect, B=-0.07, SE=0.103), 95% CI [-0.21, 0.22]. The results of both direct and indirect effects show that 0 is within the 95% CI confidence interval, so memory strength does not have a mediating effect.

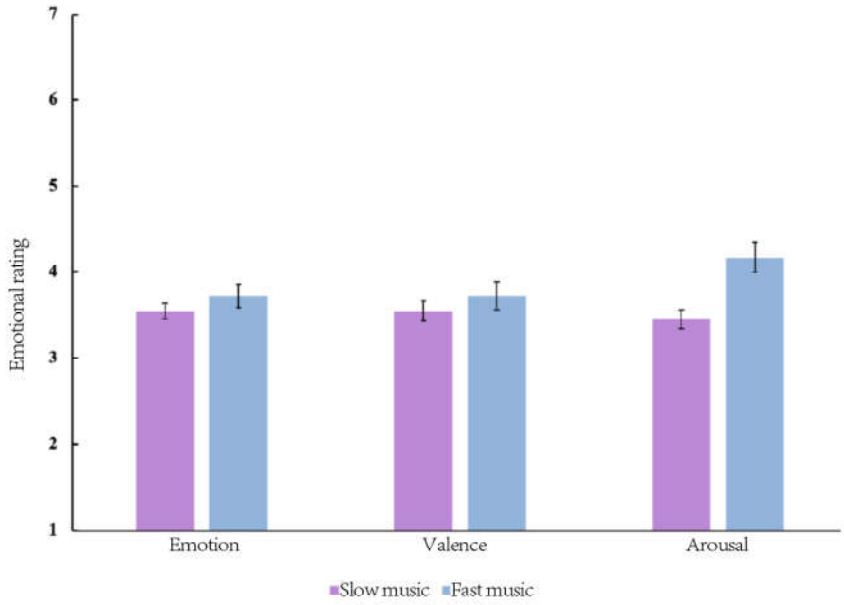

Figure 2. The emotional results evoked by music at different speeds

The emotional ratings of the participants were different under two different music conditions. The experiment used conditions (baseline, fast music, slow music) as the intra group dependent variable and conducted one-way analysis of variance. The results showed that the effect of velocity was significant ($F=16.167$, $p<0.001$, partial $n2=0.413$). This indicates that different speeds will have different effects on the emotions of the subjects. In order to further analyze the differences in emotions under the three conditions, Experiment 3 conducted pairwise comparisons of the emotional scores of the participants under the three conditions. The results showed that compared to slow music conditions ($M=3.28$, $SD=0.47$), participants under baseline conditions ($M=4.25$, $SD=0.68$) had higher emotional scores ($p<0.001$). Compared with the fast music condition ($M=3.79$, $SD=0.65$), the participants had higher emotional scores ($p<. 05$) under the baseline condition. Compared with slow music conditions, participants under fast music conditions had higher emotional scores ($p<0.05$).

There was no difference in the emotional pleasure ratings of the participants under the two music conditions. Through one-way analysis of variance, it was found that the effect of speed was significant ($F=10.473$, $p<0.001$, partialn2=0.313). This experiment further compared the emotional pleasure scores of participants under

three conditions pairwise. The results showed that there was no difference in the emotional pleasure scores of participants under fast music conditions (M=3.73, SD=0.80) and slow music conditions (M=3.55, SD=0.59) (p=0.28). In addition, compared with slow music conditions and fast conditions, participants under baseline conditions (M=4.38, SD=0.71) had higher emotional pleasure scores ($p<0.05$).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the comprehensive experiment, specific music structures or elements may induce people to develop stronger pro social tendencies. Experiments 2 and 3 respectively manipulated the effects of mode, speed, and their corresponding emotional dimensions on prosocial behavior decision-making. Only the mode and its corresponding pleasure experience demonstrate strong evidence in influencing prosocial behavior decision-making. This research result is consistent with the research findings of Fried36. The study found that there was no significant difference in the prosocial behavior decisions made by participants listening to music with different arousal levels. In other words, emotional arousal plays a relatively small role in the pro social effects generated by musical emotional experiences.

However, the research results on the prosocial effects brought about by the awakening degree corresponding to the speed of this study are inconsistent. In this study, no significant differences were found in the prosocial behavior decision-making results brought about by music with different arousal levels. The reason for this difference in results may be that Zhang Xinyue mainly focuses on the prosocial effects of speed and its corresponding arousal, and has not systematically ruled out the influence of other musical structural features (such as modes). This study strictly controlled the influence effects of each music feature in the design of three experiments, in order to separate the effects of mode and speed, which differs from existing research in terms of methods. It should be added that although the sample size required to discover the effect was calculated using G-power before the experiment in this study. But these calculations are mainly based on the parameters used in previous research experience. Future research can use a larger sample size to further validate the pro social effects of speed and its arousal experience.

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