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Those who sing together stay together:  
exploring lifelong musical engagement and  
its role in the health and wellbeing of  
couple relationships in retirement

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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis; that the following thesis is entirely my own work; and that no part of this thesis has been submitted for another degree or qualification.

Signed .....

Jill P. Morgan, April 2015

## ABSTRACT

Varied academic accounts exist of the psychological and physiological benefits experienced through engagement with music. MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell (2012) state that there is an increasing amount of evidence to suggest that music has the ability to positively affect our feelings of health and wellbeing. Despite qualitative studies into the benefits of music on older people, in particular singing, (Hallam et al, 2013; Clift et al, 2008), there has been less focus on this retired generation. In a study by Pickles (2003) into music and the 'third age', a plea is made for a further understanding of the musical opportunities and needs for this age group. For the first time ever there are more than ten million people now aged over 65 within the UK (UK Parliament website, 2015) and their number exceeds those under 16 (McVeigh, 2009). Contemporary studies indicate a positive correlation between good health and wellbeing with productive pastimes (Stephens & Flick, 2010; Franklin & Tate, 2009), and further evidence shows a positive correlation between those who are married and lifespan longevity (Jaffe et al 2006). This supports the need to further research the function of music as a motivational activity and its position within couple relationships in the older generation.

The aim of this investigation was to explore lifelong musical engagement and its role in the wellbeing of married couples in retirement. Five retired couples who were in good health and actively engaged in musical pursuits were interviewed individually utilising an idiographic methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Seeking to offer new insights into the importance of

music in this key area of health, identity and social relationships each participant offered meaningful perspectives on the phenomenon being investigated.

Analysis of their narratives revealed three overarching themes: i) the centrality of music throughout the lifespan, ii) music as a therapeutic tool, and iii) music in the present and its role in future selves. Significant findings showed how the use of music within the dyadic relationship facilitates a joint identity through the lifespan which continues into old age, assists social reconstruction when agency is under threat, brings positivity and respect through matched musical preferences, enriches feelings of positivity for the future as musical engagement is still possible when mobility becomes an issue, enhances feelings of togetherness, and provides joy through the provision of a legacy to future generations.

Recommendations are made for future research into expanding awareness of specific areas of musical engagement which enhance a sense of wellbeing in older age couples, and increasing knowledge of its role in other age group intimate partnerships.

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## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my late parents Richard and Gwyn Morgan whose passionate love of music has inspired me throughout my life and given me the motivation to carry out this research.



# CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Overview

The purpose of this investigation is to study the phenomenological experiences of couples in the third age (that is, in the period in life of active retirement, following middle age) who are engaged in musical participation, and explore the significance of music in their lives and its role in the health and wellbeing of their marital relationships in retirement. Phenomenology is concerned with identifying individuals' involvement with the world and investigating how they make sense of their experiences. This opening chapter serves to introduce the thesis and provide a detailed reasoning for its relevance in the field of music psychology. In order to understand how this investigation evolved I begin by presenting a personal account of the story leading to the study and how this account has shaped the direction of my research. I then provide a critical evaluation of associated scholarly research which highlights the gaps in existing knowledge that need to be addressed. This is then followed by my aims and research questions before presenting a reason for the choice of my research methodology and an outline of the thesis chapters.

## 1.2 Personal background to the investigation

All of my working life has been spent in the music world, both as a teacher and performer and I have consistently been passionate in my belief that music is a powerful art form which has immense therapeutic and health related properties. I have been interested for many years in the role of music in the social setting and in particular of its significance in the health and wellbeing of relationships between individuals. My particular awareness of this topic was heightened during my elder son's early teenage years during which time he developed an intense passion for playing rock and heavy metal CDs in his bedroom at such a high volume that it pervaded the entire house. At that time, around 2000, the use of portable media players was limited with the main listening device being the CD player. As a professionally trained musician whose life had been immersed in the field of classical piano music I found my son's musical choice to be totally alien to my world of Chopin and Rachmaninov. The intensity of the volume and pounding rhythms, which I found to be intolerable, became major contributing factors to a change in our mother/son relationship for a temporary period of about twelve months.

Keen to find out if other parents were encountering similar emotional reactions and fuelled by my personal experience, I embarked in 2002

upon a research project for my Master's degree. This investigated musical identity and healthy relationships within the family unit with particular reference to mother and teenage offspring interactions. Results of the study indicated that adolescents' musical habits play a fundamental role in affecting and controlling the musical experiences of their mothers and on the nature of their relationship (Morgan, MacDonald & Pitts, 2014). Recommendations were given for further research to investigate different family groupings in order to obtain further insight into determining and evaluating the effect of music on family pairings, and its contribution to positivity and togetherness throughout the lifespan.

Commencing this investigation eight years later I became aware there were still only very limited areas of research which address the role of music within alternative specific relationship pairings, such as siblings or married couples, in the same way as other studies in music and the social environment. Given that personal connections are a vital component of the human lived experience, then surely healthy and fulfilled relationships must contribute to positive wellbeing? I therefore felt compelled to investigate the significance of music within the dynamics of another specific age group from that covered in my Master's study. There were numerous choices on offer, however having watched various 'musically aware' friends enter the world of retirement in recent years

and observed their progression through the initial stages of this life changing event, I became keen to focus on how central a part music plays in retired lifestyles and to examine its role in positivity and relationship health. The choice of third age participants was strengthened by my awareness of the UK's increasingly ageing population and the need to keep them actively employed. Retired people are no longer members of a small minority group and by 2020, half the population of the UK will be aged 50 and over. The government has been taking active steps to ensure that it adapts successfully to the fundamental long term changes that this ageing population will bring to society (Department of Works & Pensions website, 2013). Hence there is a significant need to keep retired individuals well, active and contented in order to facilitate a happier and healthier population. It was therefore my aim to conduct this investigation with a view to offering insightful comments and recommendations about the positive uses of music by couples during the retirement years.

To test out the viability of the study I spoke with a selection of retired friends to ascertain their perspective on my proposed topic. It became evident from our discussions that their historical use of music throughout the lifespan played a fundamental part in how they perceived their uses of music today. I therefore came to the conclusion that it was essential for

me to include musical engagement and experiences from the early years through to retirement in order to attain a comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation. Merely starting at the moment of retirement would not illustrate the complete narrative and would in essence equate to studying the influence of Beethoven's symphonies on later day symphonists without considering the structure, meaning and processes involved in Beethoven's compositional legacy throughout his lifetime. It was this interest in the musical progression right through the lifespan that encouraged me to explore the experiences of third age retirees and the impact of music on their partner relationships.

### **1.3 Rationale for the study**

A full background literature review in which this investigation is embedded is contained in Chapters 2 & 3. This section serves to focus on the relevance and need for this research by presenting an overview of pertinent scholarly studies, in order to demonstrate this investigation's role in filling a gap and expanding current thinking. The three areas of academic research which I have chosen to review here as best suited to providing a succinct but robust reasoning to this thesis are social identity, attachment and ageing.

Numerous studies indicate the association between music listening preferences and social identity, with music of all genres playing an important role in the lifestyles of many people as it is now so easily accessible. Given the infiltration of music into our world through exposure to everyday listening experiences it is little wonder that it can exert a powerful influence on the individual. Several accounts of the emotional responses experienced by listeners exist, such as Sloboda (1991) 'Music, Structure & Emotional Response: Some Empirical Findings' which investigates the range of physical reactions whilst listening to music. Waterman (1996) in his work titled 'Emotional Responses to Music: Implicit & Explicit Effects in Listeners & Performers' seeks to find a systematic explanation of what happens when individuals interact with music. In a study by Lonsdale and North (2011) listening to music was cited by participants as a social activity, affording the opportunity to enable shared experiences and assisting in the formation and maintenance of relationships with others. Despite detailed examination of why people engage in music none of these investigations reflect on the relationship dynamics of intimate pairings whilst sharing musical activities.

Further academic work in this field includes 'Musical Identities' by MacDonald, Hargreaves & Meill (2002, p.1) which explores how music 'as

a channel of communication' provides a 'means by which people can share emotions, intentions and meanings'. In her book 'Music in Everyday Life' DeNora (2000) discusses how patterns and textures of the environment can be anticipated by music and therefore give the listener a feeling of bodily security. She also considers how music is utilised as a dynamic component in intimate relationships within personal social settings. My study serves to expand on this current literature by examining musical engagement habits in relation to a joint musical identity within marriage and reflect on the potential positive outcomes.

Additionally various theories suggest why individuals come together as partners, for example the social exchange theory (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) whereby social life demands reciprocity on the part of individuals in order to fulfil basic human needs. Here mutual social exchanges involve partners focussing on the balance between positive rewards and negative costs within relationships: the stronger the rewards the more likely the partners are to remain in the partnership. In addition the matching hypothesis (Shaw Taylor et al, 2011: Price & Vandenberg, 1979) examines the phenomenon of individuals forming relationships with others who are deemed to be of equal social desirability. This hypothesis promotes the idea that couples are drawn to those of similar levels of physical attractiveness. From these studies it can be suggested that couples who

have matched interests and social intents are more likely to have happy and strong relationships through the desire to share common goals and activities which are of mutual benefit. This study extends these assumptions and investigates music as a source of mutual attachment and the impact it can have on the relationship wellbeing of the participating couples.

With over twelve million people in the UK over the age of sixty, and contemporary studies indicating a positive correlation between marriage and lifespan longevity (Jaffe et al 2006), there is a need for research into the value of music and its impact on marital relationships in retirement, with particular relevance to 'future selves' and positive ageing. In his book 'American Paradox' David Myers (2000) argues that a close, supportive and intimate relationship with an individual's best friend across the lifespan is one of the strongest predictors of happiness. Late life intimate pairings have been shown as an important factor in fostering many levels of wellbeing such as emotional and health support (see section 3.5). My study addresses this theory by exploring the feelings of positivity through the couples' joint exploration of musical activities in retirement.



In summary, despite the plethora of research examining music in the social setting, no existing studies concentrate solely on how musical engagement as an experience can impact on the emotional, social, intellectual and spiritual wellbeing of people within a specific relationship. This study aims to fill this gap by focussing on retired couples; exploring retrospective accounts of the importance of music in their lives, how they connect to each other through music and how music within a relationship enhances communication and provides a foundation for not only individual but a joint identity in later years.

#### **1.4 Aims and research questions**

This investigation aims to offer new insights into the thoughts of people in the third age concerning music throughout the lifespan, and the subsequent symbiosis between music and the health and wellbeing of their marital relationships in retirement. Three key research questions are addressed:

- *What does music mean to the participants, historically and currently, and how central is musical engagement in defining who they are today as retirees?*
- *How do the respondents use music as a source of therapy and positivity in order to regulate agency and how does this relate to their current sense of wellbeing?*

- *Does music facilitate the formation of a joint identity and how does this contribute to the health of marital relationships in retirement and positive perceptions of future selves?*

## **1.5 Research methodology**

In order to examine and understand the lived experiences of individuals as they engage with music and with others, I felt it essential to design my research around a qualitative framework. The aim of a qualitative approach is to comprehend and interpret the experiences and activities of humans as they engage in the world around them and is therefore highly suited to the study of social engagement and close relationships. Rather than testing out a hypothesis I was keen to use a discipline which was inductive in nature and would draw out information from my participants without the constraints of specific assumptions. In this manner I would be able to construct a meaningful reality from their narratives.

Social constructionist theories suggest that we understand the world through a co-ordination with others. Our construction of reality is a constantly changing and developing dialogue (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Gergen, 2009) and musical identity is seen as a continuously evolving phenomenon. Consequently I decided that a qualitative analytical process with social constructionist orientations would be well matched to my topic

of music and social relationships. In addition, due to the reflective nature of my research paradigm I felt a methodology focussing on a small group of participants would best suit the collection of in depth and detailed information. Utilising an idiographic approach would add value to the research by providing a more complete understanding of each participant by acknowledging that humans are unique and can therefore be studied as individuals.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) fulfilled these criteria as it aims to gather a detailed and subjective understanding of the lived experience and focusses on how participants view and attach meanings to their existence. It is a highly dynamic and dual faceted methodology, in that it involves reflection on the part of the participant and researcher, therefore it is concerned with a dual hermeneutic approach to analysis. I acknowledge that as the researcher a substantial degree of sensitivity has to be shown towards the data and there was a need for me to adopt a dual stance both as the insider looking out and vice versa. A key strength of this methodology is that it emphasises the importance of the individual rather than seeking to find generalisations. I have discussed full details on the nature of IPA, its theoretical framework, design process, limitations and researcher reflexivity in Chapters 4 and 5.

## 1.6 Structure of the dissertation

In this chapter I have outlined the background to my investigation beginning with the historical backdrop to this thesis and an account of my own phenomenological experience of music and relationships. The rationale behind this research is then considered followed by aims and research questions. I present a section outlining Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as my chosen methodology before concluding with this detail of my dissertation structure.

Chapters 2 and 3 are concerned with presenting a review of empirical and theoretical literature about the topic under discussion. This is classified into two broad categories: music in health and wellbeing, and ageing and retirement matters. Academic studies demonstrating the ‘ubiquitous’ nature of music (MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell, 2012, p. 4) and the pervasive roles it plays in health and wellbeing within the social setting are discussed in Chapter 2. The second of these chapters follows with an examination of scholarly research in the field of the dynamics of ageing, and describes various aspects of retirement with an emphasis on the relationship between meaningful activities and positivity.

In Chapter 4 I describe the theoretical framework of this study, comparing different phenomenological approaches and giving support to

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis as my chosen methodology. Chapter 5 explores the framework of my research method with a descriptive account of the exact procedures involved, ethical considerations, interviewer reflexivity and limitations.

Chapters 6 to 8 expound on the findings from my analysis with each chapter being assigned to one of the overarching themes derived from the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Chapter 6 examines music as a phenomenon in the lived experiences of the participants, viewing it as a journey from the early years through to retirement and its resultant uses within their marital relationships. Chapter 7 concerns the participants' uses of music from an emotional and therapeutic perspective, and interprets its role during significant moments in life. The final analytical Chapter 8 draws all the results together and gives detailed insight into the cumulative effect of music throughout the lifespan and how this resolves into meaningful engagement in retirement and the impact this has on marital harmony, joint identity and future selves. The thesis concludes in Chapter 9 by examining the implications of my study findings and offers suggestions for future research into this particular field of music and social relationship pairings.

# CHAPTER 2 MUSIC: IDENTITY, WELLBEING AND RETIREMENT

## 2.1 Overview

Before addressing the methodology and findings of the research, it is important to position my investigation within a historical framework of academic literature and current social situations, highlighting areas where there is a need for further enquiry. Experiencing music post retirement has been shown to greatly enhance quality of life and as a consequence bring social, cognitive and health benefits. Using music as a resource in the natural setting of everyday life can determine increased levels of feelings of wellbeing and positivity. Whilst there is a large body of literature on health, active ageing and musical identity this is the first study to explore the influence of lifelong interaction with music and its impact on musical behaviours and wellbeing in retirement with particular reference to intimate couple partnerships.

Chapter 2 illustrates the background to the main musical categories under consideration, namely musical identity and social relationships, and music in healthy ageing. Chapter 3 continues the retirement theme by examining issues surrounding the ageing process. Each section within this chapter contains a brief background to the topics under consideration, namely identity and ageing and health, and a detailed

discussion of their specific relationship to music. Both Chapters 2 and 3 thereby establish the significance of this study by explicitly exposing gaps in knowledge arising from existing literature.

Continuing the subject of retirement and ageing, this chapter will aim to unravel, from existing scholarly studies, areas for further research into the nature of music within couple identity in retirement, and explain the need for unlocking and further investigating the intrinsic powers of music in the health of older age marital relationships. The chapter is divided into two separate sections titled: musical identity in social relationships, and music and healthy ageing. It is however acknowledged that a positive musical identity within social interaction will have a strong impact on health and wellbeing in ageing and therefore there will be obvious overlaps between the two sections.

## 2.2 Musical identity in social relationships

*I doubt if there's anyone nowadays who couldn't map the history of family relationships along musical lines --- that sociology of contemporary courtship, romance, sex and friendship could start with the role of music in these relationships. (Frith 2002, p. 40)*

Frith (2011) stated that music shapes our identity through a fusion of imaginative interaction and physical engagement and is therefore an aesthetic experience which is special to us as it releases us from everyday

life and social expectancies. He argued that our musical identity is active and to be perceived as a narrative not only of the 'social individual' but the 'individual in the social'. This approach facilitates the opportunity to fully view the quality or aesthetic of the musical experience.

There are many scholarly accounts of the special qualities of music that set it apart from other pursuits. Finnegan (2007) in her study into music and culture in the English town of Milton Keynes suggests that music possesses features which cannot be matched on the same level by any other activities. Other academics indicate that the seemingly extraordinary qualities of music appear to be lacking in other popular activities such as pet ownership and gardening (Slobin, 1992). In discussing the benefits of learning about music Hodges (2005, pg.111) further expounds on the question of music's unique properties by suggesting that whilst mathematics and language are knowledge systems in themselves they are unable to describe the human condition in the same manner as music through 'aesthetic experiences, meanings, structure, time and space, self-knowledge, self-identity, group identity, and healing and wholeness'. Music represents an in-built system of knowledge that allows humans to address aspects of their inner and outer worlds in an exclusive manner.



The topic of social identity and the properties and quality of interpersonal relationships have been researched extensively since the mid-1950s and are extremely complex and difficult to define. The nature of identity has been continuously shaped by successive scholarly enquiry with many meanings and definitions on offer. Identity can develop through an individual's understanding of themselves as part of a social group or through close personal relationships with intimate others. In abandoning the traditional roles of social class, Giddens (1991) describes identity as an instinctive development of self in which individuals experience a new found freedom and thereby open up new ways of being. Another common view on identity formation is that it is constructed through a process of self – categorisation (Stets & Burke, 2000) and individuals possess perceptions of what defines their levels of 'self' which can be observed in two distinct ways. Firstly there is the identity which is personal to each individual and is constructed through a self-knowledge resulting from a unique set of characteristics. This self - identity is an important dimension of social role and determines the degree of harmony or conflict within a relationship when an individual is not able or willing to embrace societal norms or the expectations of their partner. Moreover identity theorists agree that positive emotions can be experienced as a result of achieving personal identity expectations and conversely negative

emotions result from the breakdown of these expectations (Burke & Stets, 2009) which can also affect the balance within social relationships.

Secondly, pertaining to the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1978), an individual possesses several identities that relate to the perceived membership of many social groups. Thereby different social contexts may determine whether a person responds according to a self-identity level or in terms of others, such as family or friends. In a questionnaire based investigation Tekman and Hortaçsu (2002) studied the Social Identity Theory in relation to musical styles and how music can impact on an individual's social identity. They discovered that respondents rated others who liked similar styles to themselves as closer to the ideal than those who disliked them. This supports the idea that preferences in musical style genres demonstrate similar characteristics to group membership as described in the Social Identity Theory.

Festinger (1957) emphasised the idea of social comparison in relation to identity stating that people compare their abilities and attitudes to those of others. This led to his theory of cognitive dissonance, whereby individuals seek to maintain cognitive consistency when experiencing two psychologically dissimilar cognitions which produce a negative state. The resultant inherent drive to change thoughts or beliefs to relieve the

unpleasant state demonstrates that the need to maintain a positive social identity can create both a source of dissonance and a remedy. Results from a study by Masataka & Perlovsky (2012) indicate that listening to music can reduce the level of this cognitive dissonance. A control group of four year old children playing without background music were asked to rank toys in order and on subsequently being left to play alone were instructed not to interact with a particular toy. When the researcher returned and repeated the ranking game the forbidden toy was placed very low down on the list. Another group participated in the experiment in exactly the same way however they were exposed to a Mozart sonata when playing alone and as a result did not subsequently devalue the forbidden toy. Despite speculating that the Mozart sonata made the children relaxed and hence more carefree, evidence from electroencephalographic measurements indicates arousal rather than calmness. The conclusion from this study is that music assists in diminishing cognitive dissonance and therefore devaluation is unnecessary.

It can therefore be seen that the multi-faceted nature of social identity is both personal and shared, a combination of individuality and uniqueness (Jackson, 2002), and music can provide a powerful tool in identity formation by helping the individual to understand exactly who they are

(Frith, 1998). An example of this duality is found in the study by MacDonald and Wilson (2005) into the identities of jazz musicians, whereby collective interaction facilitates the awareness of a group identity whilst still allowing for individual and shared creativity. Despite the differences, these two forms of identity have self-knowledge as a commonality and it is this, alongside the sense of interaction with the world and others which dominates this investigation by considering the participants' perceived role of music in their lives and relationships.

The topic of musical identity within the field of social psychology has been much researched in order to increase our understanding of how musical experience is perceived by individuals and how it provides a source of meaning in life. Frith (1987) outlines the powerful nature of music whereby artists and genres adhered to in the formative years of young adulthood can remain as affectively powerful attachments throughout the lifespan. This lifelong relationship between music and identity is fundamental to our understanding of music in social life (Turino, 2008). Music has long acted as a focus point in social activities and this function can determine the centrality of its universal usage within social interactions and cohesion. In their study into the uses of music in everyday life North, Hargreaves and Hargreaves (2004) found that people listen to music in many situations and for many reasons. Their unique

investigation attempts to understand the phenomenon of music in the natural environment, seeking patterns which reveal details of the who with , when, where and why experiences of music listening. Their results indicate that people do actively listen to music in order to alter psychological and physiological states within a wide range of social frameworks in both interpersonal and sociological situations. A key limitation however is that there is a bias towards a white middle class, mainly student population, and further work needs to be conducted on participants from other sociodemographic groups.

Ease of access through everyday listening experiences demonstrates the ubiquitous nature of music as it pervades the many complex strands of modern day living. Humans are exposed to it on numerous levels from higher intensity personal listening within the home, to lower intensity experiences in public areas such as shops and restaurants. Using the Experience Sampling Method, research by Krause, North and Hewitt (2015) indicates that through easy access to listening devices such as MP3 players, individuals have more control over their listening habits and are therefore transformed into active users rather than compliant listeners. Having the option to experience own choice music in day to day living has been seen to result in higher levels of positivity as opposed to encountering non choice music. Hargreaves, Hargreaves and North (2011,

p.159) suggest responses to music incorporate a close relationship between the listener, the environment, the music itself and the situation and these are all linked to cognitive and physiological responses within the social setting. Even within the sphere of practical musical engagement through instrumental playing and singing, individuals develop a sense of social identity through their performance with others. Evidence from this can be found in the field of social psychology in which individuals identify with others in group task performance ((Tarrant, North & Hargreaves, 2002). Hence, alongside its aesthetic and emotionally charged properties, music can exert a strong influence on the individual and on interactive social relationships, thereby illustrating that music and relationships are in fact connected. According to Turino (2008) musical engagement with others can be so absolute and powerful that at times it produces a feeling that identities have fused together.

Why therefore is music so important in cultivating a close intimate relationship with another? Evidence shows that music has a unique adaptive importance which is significant in the biological world as it has no survival or reproductive benefits. This produces an interesting angle on music and mate selection which can be found in a chapter by Miller (2000) who develops Darwin's 1871 argument that music evolved along with birdsong as a sexually selected display for courtship purposes. As a

behavioural pattern in which sound is created by the communicator and received by the respondent, Miller suggests that music contains aesthetic features which emotionally stimulate our perception, cognition and feelings. Peretz (2001, p. 115) explores this further and reflects on two characteristics of music which determine its role within communication, namely the harmonious blending of different pitches and the regularity of rhythm. Both of these combine to produce a unique formula that allows group interaction and therefore facilitates the bonding process which focusses on benefitting the group as a whole. Knowledge of the functionality of music within the dyadic pairing would progress our understanding of its bonding role in the maintenance and strengthening of partnerships.

Research suggests that the development of relationship identity through music is linked to a shared set of values which enhance social attractiveness. Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) determine that individuals who consider music to be an important aspect of their lives demonstrate the connection between personality and music preferences which lead to increased social desirability. Given the arguments of the matching hypothesis of Walster et al (1966) which suggest that people are more likely to form long standing relationships with those who are of equal physical attractiveness it might also be expected that there is the

same relationship between matched musical preferences. Boer et al (2011) further illustrates the course of social bonding through sharing musical preferences and how it facilitates increased knowledge of an individual's attitudes towards life. Whilst this current study does not focus on specific genres and pieces of music, there is a need to question matched musical activities in retirement in order to identify areas of commonality and their importance within intimate partnerships. Additionally there is a gap in relationship based literature concerning the strength of this musically driven social bonding process in comparison with other activities and attitudes, which this investigation seeks to address.

From earliest times music has been found to promote socially united identities and cohesion within cultures and traditions, with empirical studies demonstrating its effective usage in cultivating prosocial behaviour in humans from a very young age through joint musical engagement (Kirshner & Tomasello, 2010). Ruud (2010) charts the course of identity from the earliest years whereby humans become aware of their sense of self and construct personal identities through relationships with others. He develops this further by suggesting that our experiential narratives of music related events determine the amount of emotional outlay we devote to different situations through the



stimulating properties of music. Ruud also states that music forms a key part in our life stories and is an important indicator of our position in social situations.

A qualitative study undertaken by Hays and Minichiello (2005) focusses on the significance of music in the lives of the older generation specifically amongst a group of Australians aged sixty years and over. It is an important investigation in furthering our knowledge of how older people relate to music and its role in the promotion of self-identity and wellbeing from a psychological rather than a sociological perspective. It pays particular reference to those who are fit and actively engaged within the community, which is highly relevant to my investigation as the majority of current literature is rooted in studies of the frail and infirm. Drawing on data from interviews, the researchers code the results into five categories summarised as identity, connection, wellbeing, emotions, stimulus and beauty. As a result of their findings they conclude that through experiencing music the participants are able to construct a sense of self and thereby enhance meaningfulness in their lives. It is apparent that they utilise music on a daily basis in the maintenance of wellbeing and demonstrate associated patterns of life stories within their narratives. Self - identities are therefore enhanced alongside greater feeling of connectedness to others. Whilst this study is not representative

of members of the third age as a whole, it gives general insights into the meaningfulness of music in the lives of those more active older members of society and illustrates the individualistic nature of musical interaction as outlined by other empirical investigations (Sloboda, 2005; Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald, 2002).

A key component in the construction of musical interconnection with others rests in its function as a communication tool (Cross, 2014) as it satisfies the human need to share emotional experiences and activities. As Schäfer and Sedlmeier (2010) suggest, throughout human development from the earliest times, the benefits of communication through music might be a key reason for why we like music at all. Some express the opinion that individuals absorb the emotions of a composer whilst others view musical communication more directly as a means of promoting a message or viewpoint (Clarke, Dibben & Pitts, 2010, p.105). This form of conveying a message is highlighted in the work of DeNora (2000, p.126 - 127) who illustrates how music can be utilised to communicate a shift in the dynamics of a relationship with a partner within a sociological construct thereby utilising it as an agency of change. She sets out an example of a deteriorating marriage whereby the wife consciously decides to engage in music aimed at alienating her husband. However Sloboda and O'Neill (2001) comment that music is not being

utilised in such instances to merely act out personal states of mind, but it is an intrinsic part of the emotional framework which incorporates the sentiment itself and the interaction and interpretation of individuals to that emotion. This powerful communicative influence of music can be observed within intimate relationships whereby couples, both friends and intimates, share the aesthetic experience of musical engagement and thereby generate a source of positive social interaction.

Just over a decade ago Sloboda questioned current thinking on the position of music and education. He highlighted a key social problem concerning the general view that music was seen as a specialist subject (Sneddon, 2011) and therefore the musically untrained were left with feelings of inadequacy in comparison to their trained counterparts. The impact of this meant unwillingness by the untrained to engage in musical activities and devote significant periods of time to this leisure pursuit. Since that time research has sought to investigate these negative self-judgements of musicality in order to determine what constitutes a healthy musical identity. Ruddock and Leong (2005) studied the thoughts of a group of untrained musicians and their findings revealed that negative perceptions were rooted in three things: firstly an unfulfilled wish at some key stage in life to play music, secondly a negative experience during formal music learning in the past and finally the lack

of musical knowledge, both theoretical and practical. This suggests that older familial and teacher role models assume an important part in encouraging positive experiences in the young, by providing guiding and support mechanisms towards the formation of flourishing musical identities (Pitts, 2012, p. 49; Jorgensen, 2011) which continue through the lifespan into old age.

An investigation into music and family dynamics by Borthwick and Davidson (2002), whilst essentially focussing on the parent – child relationship, recognises the essential role of music in identity development. They suggest that musical identity is dynamic and continuously changing, not only individually but within collective relationships. This evolving identity landscape can be seen within personal and shared musical tastes which vary according to mood, environment and many other situations (Hargreaves, Miell & MacDonald, 2002). A comprehensive study into music and relationship attachment throughout the lifespan by Pasiali (2014) sets out current thinking on the use of music to assist in the production of healthy relationships. Although the paper is orientated towards music therapy intervention it has relevance for day to day lived musical experiences. Findings illustrate the positive effects of music not only in reducing stress as shown in the following section 2.3 but its ability to restore

relationships and support healthy partnerships through developed social skills. The author states that making music together promotes feelings of unity and connectedness and assists with coping skills through improved moods and enhanced communication. Suggestions are made for further research to ascertain how music can be utilised as a pre-emptive measure to stave off potential threats to relationship health.

In a study into the factors which affect the enjoyment of music in third agers Pickles (2003) puts out a request for more research to increase our understanding of the musical requirements and openings for the older generation especially as music appears to assist as a coping mechanism from life's difficulties. This could be further advanced to discuss the implications for musical identity in the older members of society to establish the strength of its role in couple partnerships with special reference to identity problems encountered specifically by third agers. These difficulties can include anxiety (Ferretti et al, 2001), changes in self-regulation and mood (Berzonsky, 2009). Anxiety symptoms in old age are highly prevalent and contribute to physical decline and mood alteration. In their detailed study into a review of geriatric anxiety based literature between 1990 and 2007, Bryant, Jackson and Ames (2007) recommend further work needs to be conducted in order to provide greater awareness and effective coping strategies which would help to

alleviate associated problems. The use of music in anxiety reduction in people with dementia has shown to be a highly powerful tool (Guetin et al, 2009; McCaffrey, 2008) however more comprehensive exploration of this area is needed to expound on these findings and further develop them to incorporate the 'fit aged'.

Another therapy based research investigation of relevance by Baker, Grocke and Pachana (2012) centres around the success of musical intervention in couples where one partner suffers from dementia. As a result of sharing music, a joint identity is reformed through spending quality time together, experiencing feelings of intimacy and engaging in past memories. The authors therefore suggest that partner life quality can be enhanced through intimacy and meaningful experiences which are essential to healthy spousal interaction.

To summarise this section, in discussing the identity focussed academic literature available thus far it is clear to see that there is a plethora of research concerning music in the social scene especially targeted at the younger generation, music therapy for physical and mental illnesses, emotions evoked through music and music as a channel of communication. Music connects us in many ways, however the interplay

between musical identity, older people and intimate relationships is sorely under researched.

### **2.3 Music and healthy ageing**

The fact that music has the capability to affect our everyday lives is a well - known and much researched topic area. It enables us to voice our emotions and feelings on a personal basis and in interaction with our fellow humans. This can have an impact on our feelings of health and wellbeing and play a key part in the ageing process. In fact the healing and positive effects of music have existed from ancient times and the Greeks were known to use music therapy as a mainstream medicinal ingredient for many disorders in appreciation of its healing powers on physiological, social and emotional levels (Pratt & Jones, 1987). In assessing the strength of the health benefits on offer through musical engagement this section begins with a brief background to healthy ageing in general before embarking on a detailed account of current empirical thought on the contribution of music to this field.

Individuals born between 1946 and 1966 are termed the 'Baby Boomers' and as shown in Chapter 3 they will count for over fifty percent of the UK population by 2020. Much empirical research (Butrica, Iams & Smith, 2003; Sabelhaus & Manchester, 1995) illustrates that on average they

will retire in more comfortable financial circumstances and in better health than previous generations. Despite these generalisations the impact of ageing does bring heightened risks of health issues, decreased cognitive powers and a reduction in social integration. It is therefore important to seek ways for improving and supporting people in retirement and to assist them in maintaining good health and wellbeing for as lengthy a period as possible.

In 1948 the World Health Organisation defined health and wellbeing as a complete physical, mental and social state 'not merely the absence of disease and infirmity'. Drawing on research by Danna and Griffin (1999, p. 364) into occupational health and wellbeing it is suggested that health and wellbeing can be honed down into more specific meanings: health refers to particular physical and psychological concerns within the medical sphere and wellbeing furthers this through a more holistic view of the human being, incorporating degrees of life experiences and related emotions. Therefore it is important to determine how an individual interacts to, and within the world, and measure not only their physical condition but their emotional, social and intellectual state.

Humans can enhance, maintain and regulate these states according to their desires and aspirations in life and many utilise music to assist in



this process. Music is indeed a popular activity which appeals to all age groups and its engaging qualities have led to much empirical research being undertaken into its association with health and wellbeing throughout the lifespan. For centuries it has been associated with the maintenance of a healthy balance between body and mind (Horden, 2000) and for its intrinsic healing properties though the ability to empower and create feelings of harmony, uplift and positivity (Batt-Rawden, 2010; Clift & Hancox, 2006; Gabrielsson, 2001).

A key review of medical literature from 1990 to 2004 was undertaken by Staricoff (2004) for the Arts Council England to investigate the potential positive effects of arts related activities on health. Evidence highlights the important health benefits of engagement in the arts both physiologically and psychologically. For example individuals can use music to create feelings of relaxation which have a favourable effect on blood pressure, stress and heart rate (Knight & Rickard, 2001), and attendance at cultural events is shown to positively affect blood pressure and hormone levels (Konlaan et al, 2000). A substantial number of academic literature exists which illustrates that music serves as a positive function on individual, social and cultural levels (MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell, 2012; MacDonald, Meill & Hargreaves, 2002; North &

Hargreaves, 2008) and therefore acts as a determinant to health and wellbeing.

In assessing the relationship between music and health, the theoretical framework proposed by MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell (2012, p. 7-10) encapsulates four key categories for discussion: music therapy, music education, community music and everyday uses of music. Whilst acknowledging the important role of clinical intervention in music therapy, the benefits of formal musical training and the popularity of community projects, this investigation will focus mainly on the phenomenon of everyday musical engagement, both privately and in public situations. It is also recognised that all of these categories are interlinked and there will inevitably be references which apply to one or more.

Empirical investigations into music and wellbeing exist in two distinct methodologies, namely quantitative and qualitative. Many existing arts related health based research studies are found within clinical discourse and for many subject areas which demand clear evidence of a hypothesis they are highly appropriate. Research studies in this domain have illustrated how self-choice music can assist in pain management reduction and thereby achieve physical and psychological benefits.

Laboratory based experiments have concluded that, in comparison with own choice and non - choice selected music listening during times of pain, a lower heart rate, decreased anxiety and reduced pain can be achieved from listening to preferred music (Mitchell & MacDonald, 2006; Mitchell, MacDonald & Brodie, 2006). However for this current investigation, literature will be reviewed which is embedded within the qualitative domain as it affords the study of personal stories, meanings and emotions among the sample criteria of fit and active aged.

The subject of music and emotions is one of the most densely researched aspects of musical engagement as it looks at the way music has the capacity to alter our mood states, being utilised by many people as a means of experiencing emotion (Juslin & Sloboda, 2001). The topic unites research in the fields of psychology, neuroscience and cognition, thereby taking a multidisciplinary approach to seek new ways of investigating the relationship between music and emotion. For this study, empirical literature considering emotional health is of particular relevance as it is fundamentally rooted in the capacity of music to enhance relationships.

For the majority, feelings of emotional positivity are sought from musical interaction in order to pursue the aim of experiencing a fulfilling and meaningful existence (Ruud 2010, p. 107). This corresponds to the

theories contained in Positive Psychology, one of the newest branches of psychology, by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000) who advocate that through positive thinking and optimism lives can be more meaningful and fulfilling. Their aim is to further understand human behaviour and construct effective interventions to shape healthier individuals and more flourishing societies. One of their key promotional thoughts is that happiness can be achieved by personally developing increased feelings of optimism, hence the term Positive Psychology. It is interesting to view the role of music within this theory as demonstrated in a study by Ferguson and Sheldon (2013) who conducted music listening tests as a means of investigating the effectiveness of explicitly attempting to create positive feelings of happiness whilst listening to music. As a result they are able to conclude that happiness levels do improve when engaging with positive music particularly when this is combined with a desire to become more joyful. This is an important finding in the field of wellness and supports the theory that music acts an important socioemotional resource and a positive intervention in the maintenance of good health.

Although undeniably a powerful source of emotional outpouring for some, others claim to be unaffected by music and demonstrate scant enthusiasm for its perceived effect. A study by Sandstrom and Russo (2011) aims to seek essential differences between individuals who are inclined to

empathise with music, versus those who are less interested. In creating an Absorption in Music Scale they are able to judge with reliable consistency that those willing to be heavily immersed in music are more likely to experience an emotional response. Despite focussing solely on response to classical music the study paves the way for further research into the strength of response levels in relation to the amount of individual differences in musical absorption alongside the Positive Psychology theory of attempts to create happiness through musical interaction. Given the heterogeneous nature of music and expanding on the Sandstrom and Russo study, research by Eerola (2011) investigated the features of nine musical datasets in order to ascertain whether or not emotions expressed in music are genre specific. Through evaluation of emotion across these musical categories, which incorporated, classical, film soundtracks and pop, the results indicate that genre is important for positively valenced emotions but less so for arousal. The study is unique as it is the first to investigate the dataset features representative of different genres and seek commonalities.

In addition, research shows that despite being a powerful medium of expressing emotion, music it is not exclusive to the musically knowledgeable. Sandstrom and Russo's study, along with other empirical investigations, also demonstrates that emotional responses do not depend

upon the extent of musical training, as the musically untrained are able to identify and process sophisticated musical constructs as competently as their fellow more knowledgeable counterparts (Bigand et al, 2005; Lynchner, 1998). Therefore negative comments from untrained musicians concerning a perceived inability to experience the full benefits on offer from musical engagement can be deemed to be inaccurate. There is no empirically grounded reason for this assumption and their thoughts may be rooted in other causes (see section 6.3). Research by Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010, p. 115-117) indicates that both listening and performing music can have a therapeutic effect on individuals in a self-help capacity as those who engage in music frequently report enhanced feelings of creativity and emotion. The role of music as an outlet for self-expression and emotion is well-documented. Chin and Rickard (2014) studied the use of emotion regulation strategies and their links between music and wellbeing. Whilst their findings are limited due to the reliance on self-reports they do clearly demonstrate that the use of music whilst reframing a situation through cognitive reappraisal does result in increased feeling of positive health and enhances wellbeing. These results reinforce and extend previous investigations (Saarikallio, 2008; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007) into the emotion based uses of music in everyday life.

Koelsch (2014, p. 178) suggests that emotional responses to music are real responses as opposed to subjective feelings as they display the physical hallmarks of actual emotions such as facial and bodily expressions. He highlights the various component parts of these emotional reactions ranging from those which are exactly the same as everyday life emotions (such as sadness and joy) to those which are often sought for within the music but which occur rarely in day to day living (such as awe and completeness). From this he states that emotional reaction to music directly targets everyday life, in that it assists in the regulation of moods and social functioning.

In reference to the above comment by Koelsch on physical expression much research has been conducted into ageing and emotional recognition in relation to facial expression (Ruffman et al, 2008) however there is a dearth of work investigating the auditory faculty. Responses to musical stimuli have been found to alter across the lifespan with distinct observable patterns. In their study of 114 participants across three age groups (younger - mean age 21.8 years, middle aged - mean age 44.5 years and older adults - mean age 67.2 years) Lima and Castro (2011) found that the recognition of emotions change with age. As people grow older their response to perceived negative emotions in music (for example, sad and scary) appear to decrease, whereas their response to positive

emotions (for example, happy and peaceful) remain stable and do not alter. This evidence is interesting as it suggests the increasing potential for music to enhance the lives of those in the third age as the impact of negative musical emotions is lessened.

Music is generally regarded as a powerful stimulus for evoking emotions and provides us with the ability to express meanings and thoughts. An investigation by Barrett et al (2010) seeks to unravel the link between human interaction with music and emotional nostalgia. Studying the response of over two hundred students to popular music using a rating scale they conclude that reactions are dependent on context-level (that is, a previous relationship to a song) and person-level (such as mood and personality) constructs. In general nostalgic music appears to induce emotions ranging from happy to sad, whereas songs that are non-autobiographical and therefore not reminiscent of the past seem to cause irritation. However, in accordance with previous research by Wildschut et al (2006) nostalgia is deemed to be a predominately positive experience. Despite the strengths of this study in seeking fuller understanding of music evoked nostalgia within the human experience there are some limitations. Emotional intensity is not assessed and the participant sample is biased towards young adults. Barrett et al suggest that music-



evoked nostalgia in older persons would generate feelings of positivity but this has yet to be fully researched.

A growing body of research stresses the need for people to adopt a more spiritual approach to life in order to bring meaning and hope to their existence (MacKinley, 2001). Spirituality is difficult to define as it is highly personal to each individual, however it can be strongly linked to a person's need to seek a meaning or purpose to life through a relationship with a divine being or through relationships with fellow human beings. Parsons (2001) refers to this dual nature of spirituality as something which encompasses both personal sense making of life and identity, and involves communing with others in practising a belief or faith. Whilst some will classify themselves as spiritual through a holistic approach to life (McFadden, 1996), others identify more closely with religion in the traditional sense. In fact current literature suggests that retired people have more of a leaning towards religion than their working counterparts (Dillon & Wink, 2007). Interestingly Crowther et al (2002) argue that *positive spirituality* should be added as a fourth element to the successful ageing model of Rowe and Kahn (1997) as discussed in section 3.4. This would then take into account the beliefs and thoughts of older people and by focussing on the 'health relevant' positive aspects of spirituality would

assist older people to develop a personal relationship with a divine being and/or with others.

The link between religion and wellbeing is of great sociological interest and has been well evidenced in the past few decades (Hoverd & Sibley, 2013; Ellison, 1991). A recent study of a group of senior citizens in Mississippi by Wilmoth et al (2014) found that religious participation was a significant predictor of wellbeing divorced from other social activities. Despite the limitations of a purposeful sample of Caucasian participants in a region known for its high proportion of religious participation, it strongly serves to suggest that religious engagement could act as a barrier to age related stressors. Research by Stroope, Draper and Whitehead (2013) indicates a robust link between caring images of a divine being and a sense of purpose in life. They argue the reason for this to be threefold: firstly through a theory of attachment a personal intimacy with God and sureness of His love helps to alleviate life's burdens, secondly believers tend to adopt positive coping strategies which act as defence mechanisms against stressful events, and thirdly symbolic internal perceptions of a loving God are associated with a personal view of self which in turn aid the development of self-esteem and a sense of purpose in life. This suggests that seeking 'spiritual' activities which lead to an understanding of self through communication with a divine being

and/or with fellow humans can assist in generating feelings of happiness and wellbeing. Through a process of 'geotranscendence' Tornstam (2005) suggests that meaningful interaction with others will facilitate feelings of wholeness and contentment, leading towards a higher level of transcendence which is especially relevant at a time when the lifespan is nearer to the end than the beginning.

In a comprehensive study into fifty two academic articles spanning a period between 1973 and 2000, Lipe (2002) reveals several key features which consistently appear concerning the connection between music, spirituality and wellbeing: music enables abstract thoughts, such as expectation, to become concrete phenomenon which leads to personal growth, music inspires the imagination facilitating increased creativity, music facilitates access to the depths of being and combines this with personal experience of the conscious world, music enables access to differing states of consciousness, spiritual and transcendent aspects of human experience which may provide healing, music allows communication with others and a divine being, musical structure and familiarity brings comfort and reassurance. In a recent study by Joseph (2014), ten members of an Anglican church in Melbourne Australia, aged from mid-thirties to eighties, were interviewed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis in order to gain further insights into the

connection between music and spirituality with wellbeing and life quality. Music was found to act as a powerful tool for co-joining people with God and others, to be at the core of participation identity, to facilitate feelings of emotional uplift and reduce social isolation. Whilst the relationship between music and spirituality is highly complex, and is certainly not exclusive to the Christian faith, the study serves to support earlier studies (Wlodarczyk, 2007; Hays & Minichiello, 2005) that music offers older people a means of experiencing and communicating an awareness of spirituality which enhances wellbeing.

One specific aspect of spiritual engagement is listening to religious music in the home, for example on the radio, and this is an easily accessible method of religious absorption when mobility becomes an issue. A recent longitudinal study of approximately one thousand five hundred third age participants by Bradshaw et al (2014) seeks to explore the neglected field of listening to religious music. Musical engagement habits are measured and the results support the hypothesis that 'listening to religious music will be associated with improvements in mental health over time among older U.S. adults, showing a positive correlation between the two variables. An interesting observation is that the results are consistent regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status of the participants however the setting in which the listening took place was not considered.

Further research needs to be conducted to see how engagement with religious music, both listening and singing can enhance personal relationships and how important is the meaningfulness of the musical environment or context.

Healthy ageing is strongly linked to the maintenance of a positive state of mind and there is much evidence which highlights the beneficial uses of singing in the reduction of stress in older adults. Despite many of the studies focussing on the elderly in care homes the results prove to convincingly show the positive health and wellbeing benefits from engagement in group singing in older age. Research by Cohen et al (2006) into the psychological and physiological wellbeing in a group of people aged over sixty five years singing in a community choir for twelve months revealed significant health improvements. Of the two groups, the intervention group reported better health ratings, fewer falls, higher morale and reduced feelings of isolation than the control group. Even after a twenty four month follow up members of the intervention group were still exhibiting greater self-reported wellness ratings.

In 2008, Clift et al from the Sidney de Haan Research Centre for Art and Health embarked upon a cross-national survey into the relationship between singing and wellness. Their comprehensive investigation

incorporated choral societies from England, Germany and Australia and drew over one thousand singers from these three countries. The reasoning behind the study was to further contribute to existing knowledge and also to outline a framework for further support from local authorities and the NHS into providing opportunities for the older generation to engage in and benefit from singing with others. Despite the gender bias of the participants in favour of women, overall the results showed substantial increases in feelings of wellbeing and positivity. These advantages are due to the ability of music to trigger a wide range of social, psychological and health benefits. Interestingly, as in the findings mentioned earlier in this section concerning the ability of untrained and trained musicians to experience the same level of emotion, this study illustrates that those with little or no choral training were able to fully benefit from an active experience of choral singing.

A substantial number of clinical and non-clinical research investigations have been involved in processing exactly how singing impacts on the quality of life in older age. For example music can positively strengthen the immune system through the increased production of salivary immunoglobulin A (Kreutz et al, 2004), facilitate social bonding as demonstrated in Skingley and Bungay's Silver Song Club (2010) which trialled the effects of singing on the health of older people, and provide

distraction from everyday worries (Clift and Hancox, 2010). A complete chapter by Clift (2012) in the book *Music, Health and Wellbeing* edited by MacDonald, Kreutz and Mitchell, is devoted to the topic of singing and wellness both from a qualitative and quantitative perspective. Here Clift comments that research into the benefits of singing started as recently as the 1990s despite an interesting comment made over three hundred years ago by William Byrd in 1588 suggesting eight reasons to encourage people to learn to sing. However, despite the richness of information gathered so far he suggests we are some distance from fully comprehending both the importance and limitations of singing in the field of health and wellbeing.

The New Dynamics for Ageing UK cross-council research programme titled *Music for Life* has in recent years been examining the effects of musical engagement on the social, cognitive, emotional and physical wellbeing of older adults (Hallam et al, 2013). Incorporating three case studies of up to five hundred retirees in each, all participating in the musical activities on offer such as choral singing and instrumental tuition, participants were required to fill in questionnaires and respond to interviews in order to measure the impact of music on their quality of life. Results fully support existing findings as outlined previously in this chapter that active musical participation significantly enhances

wellbeing, reduces stress levels, improves social life and physical health, and stimulates the intellect through the provision of new skills. Of particular interest to this current investigation is the link between music and social bonding (Cross, 2009; Hagen & Bryant 2003) which explains how mutual engagement with others in musical activities enhances feelings of wellness and cohesion. However this research needs to be extended to predicate the possibility that music can facilitate a dimension of social organisation between couples which is meaningful and can assist in positive thoughts of future togetherness.

## **2.4 Summary**

In conclusion this chapter provides evidence for the unique qualities of music and the importance of musical engagement as a dimension of positive ageing. Experiencing music during the lifespan through listening and active participation such as singing combines to result in significant positive outcomes to the quality of life. Existing research clearly suggests that musical activities are conducive to establishing a sense of self and a shared identity in the social domain. This stimulates emotions, perceptions and cognition which act as a determinant to communication, empowering individuals to be more actively engaged in meaningful activities. Physical benefits from musical interaction include decreased anxiety, lower blood pressure and reduced heart rate. Other positive



effects of music have been shown to add meaning to existence, improve social bonding and strengthen relationships. Empirical studies illustrate the supportive role of music in retirement and its therapeutic uses in creating a sense of harmony, uplift and positivity. Yet looking more closely into the literature, the only way to soundly judge the impact of music on people in the third age and its role in intimate couple partnerships, is to further evaluate its uses and determine the function of music in the relationship.

Given the reliable evidence shown in this chapter that positive outcomes can be achieved through musical intervention it is important to explain the relevance of this investigation within current age related socioeconomic and health issues. With the number of older adults in the UK increasing substantially, they are exposed to age related conditions such as anxiety, pain, depression and isolation. The following chapter discusses these concerns and aims to explain the reasoning behind the need for the use of music listening and active participation as a therapeutic tool to improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of third agers.

## CHAPTER 3 THE DYNAMICS OF AGEING AND A 'RETIRED' IDENTITY

### 3.1 Overview

Perceptions of successful ageing are significant in our understanding of this complex construct and key to advancing methods of assisting older adults to age healthily. The previous chapter presented a review of literature specific to the benefits of musical engagement however it is pertinent to reflect on the problems faced by modern society in coping with the challenges of an increasingly aged population. The aim of this chapter is to present current empirical inquiry into aspects of ageing and to highlight the need for interventions to support and enhance strategies for positive future selves and thereby justify the relevance of this investigation.

This chapter will firstly consider the social and financial implications of a rapidly ageing population and the resultant impact on today's society. Secondly it examines the physical and psychological issues around the process of retiring and their effects on the newly adopted lifestyle. Literature and current research on the topic of successful ageing is then considered with an emphasis on encouraging the implementation of positive activities. The chapter conclusion section discusses health and wellbeing in retirement and the importance of long-term intimate

partnerships during the third age. All sections within the chapter will be accompanied by links to relevant scholarly studies and contemporary views from media sources. The chapter ends with a summary of the two literature review chapters.

### **3.2 Socio –economic predicament of an ageing population**

A dramatic ‘age quake’ is shaking not only Britain, but the world, with those aged sixty and over being the fastest growing age group globally. For the first time ever life expectancy for a 65 year old female is now 21 years and 19 years for men (Office for National Statistics 2013c), and the number of people aged over 85 has doubled in the past thirty years. It is estimated that by 2020 half of the nation’s population will be aged 50 plus and around 19 million people will be over 65 by 2050. These figures represent a socio-economic problem of huge proportions to governments and there is a need for it to adapt efficiently and successfully to the fundamental long term changes that society is currently encountering. Naaldenberg et al (2012) note that decision makers at all levels have the joint responsibility of addressing the challenges associated with an ever increasing ageing population by encouraging individual independence through a supportive network of policies and interventions.

The intense strain on the fiscal services of the nation is one of the major hurdles relating to increased ageing. Society has come a long way from Lloyd George's 1908 Old Age Pension Act whereby citizens aged seventy and over and on a low income could claim the equivalent of around twenty five pence per week (Rowlingson & McKay, 2012). At that time, the average life expectancy was no more than fifty and only a quarter of the population survived to that age. Despite many reforms in the decades that followed it has taken a substantial increase in life expectancy to drive consecutive governments to take any action. From an economic perspective the Department for Work and Pensions states that currently about one seventh of all public expenditure is allocated to those in retirement and that whilst state benefits and the National Health Service account for just below fifty percent of government expenditure, the majority is allocated to the aged. With the state pension age rising to sixty six by 2020 and to sixty seven by 2028, the Department of Works and Pensions will be reviewing ONS life expectancy figures and making policy decisions on the retirement ages of the future, with the aim of recommending that retirement should constitute one third of adult life (Watt, Wintour & Elliott, 2013).

Taking into account today's statistics, many individuals can potentially expect to enjoy thirty years or more in retirement (Kay & Smith, 2014).

As this period is undoubtedly expanding with many exiting early from the fulltime workforce through the availability of attractive early retirement packages (Kohli & Rein, 1991) alongside a much increased life expectancy, this translates into the reorganisation of the average life sequence with a deepening uneasiness about the fiscal liabilities of public pension funds.

The impact of increased ageing and therefore public responsibility is also heavily felt in the field of healthcare. In 2013 the Care and Quality Commission, whose role is to make sure that public health services meet national standards, hosted a conference to discuss the implications of the ageing population and how to tackle the many problematical issues which arise. A key area concerned the provision of upgraded health services with an emphasis on delivering improved strategies for the prevention of age related illnesses. Hence the aim of current biogerontology research is to search for effective intervention methods to regulate ageing with the aim of averting illnesses in the aged and improving life quality (Rattan, 2007). The goal of such research is not to lengthen life expectancy for its own sake but to ensure that lives are free from disability and dependency not only for the health of the individual but as a means to reduce reliance on an already overburdened National Health Service.

People over 65 account for the highest activity and spend within the NHS across primary, secondary and social care and it therefore follows that if this can be reduced by keeping the ageing population fit and healthy, retirement years will become increasingly active. This potentially could mean encouraging people to retire later, return to the workforce or engage in meaningful pastimes in order to keep them active for longer, thereby reducing dependence on the NHS and/or assisting the economy by allowing employers and individuals to afford pensions.

With welfare bodies promoting a range of retirement activities in order to postpone dependency and disability there is a clear emphasis on reducing the number of people relying on public funding. Foucault (1997) calls this simultaneous control of the population and their characteristics as engagement with 'government'. According to Tulle (2004, p. 181), as a result the individual becomes a subject of 'government' by considering expert recommendations and taking the appropriate course of action. This is a technique of self-construction and agency which is considered in section 3.4.

### 3.3 Outlining effective retirement

*'Freed from the necessity of work, retirement should be the life stage best suited for fulfilment through intrinsically motivated activities.'* (Hooker & Ventis 1984, p. 483)

Due to the increase in life expectancy the nature of retirement has changed markedly with the prospect of many years of freedom from the constraints of fulltime employment. Current retirees form part of the baby boomer generation of those born post World War 11, between 1945 and 1964. They can realistically expect to live longer than their own parents by some ten to twenty five years, living much improved and diverse lifestyles as medical care and modern technology has progressed rapidly during their lifetimes. This stage of life has been perceived by many to be a time of positivity with the opportunity to embrace a new found independence, or for others as a negative experience associated with psychological upset. Most people plan for this major life changing event and there are a plethora of websites offering guidance for successful engagement with retirement and later life issues.

**Figure 3.1 Sources of advice**

Gov UK <a href="http://www.gov.uk">www.gov.uk</a>	The government's website offering assistance with pensions and retirement planning
Age UK <a href="http://www.ageuk.org.uk">www.ageuk.org.uk</a>	The UK's largest charity concerned with all aspects of Later Life
Retirement Expert <a href="http://www.retirementexpert.co.uk">www.retirementexpert.co.uk</a>	Offers assistance in all aspects of retirement
National Pensioners' Convention <a href="http://www.npuk.org">www.npuk.org</a>	Advertises itself as the 'campaigning voice of Britain's pensioners' and deals with all aspects concerning their welfare and interests
UK Retirement <a href="http://www.ukretirement.co.uk">www.ukretirement.co.uk</a>	Website designed to meet the needs of those over 50 aiming to maximise the benefits of later life

All of the websites listed in Figure 3.1, along with many others, offer individuals assistance in focussing on wide ranging matters such as money, health, lifestyle and leisure activities.

Whilst such available help for those entering and experiencing retirement is highly valuable, Kim and Moen (2001) argue that scholars are beginning to suggest that it is more than just a single transition between work and non-work but rather a process which evolves over time. This life course approach demonstrates the importance of human development and stresses the interdependence of major life events.

Many scholarly studies exist which investigate the level of satisfaction with retirement by analysing various factors such as relationship situations, financial indicators, health and retirement circumstances. Using the Dynamic Model of Work Satisfaction developed by Bussing et al (1999), Potočnik, Tordera and Peiró (2011) apply this to retirement as a means of seeking valuable qualitative insights into levels of health and wellbeing during the period of adjustment to this major life event. They report results from retirement satisfaction forms which indicate that individuals who are dissatisfied with retirement and are fixated with their problems record lower levels of health and wellbeing in comparison to those who are satisfied with the retirement process and are motivated



to maintain their level of aspirations and contentment. Despite the limitations of a relatively modest sample size of two hundred and seventy participants they address the need for further research to concentrate on the quality of retirement satisfaction in order to assist retirees adapt efficiently in their move away from the workforce and consequently enhance their lives.

Certainly further insights into the way retirees manage their time and what constitutes an effective recipe for positivity are needed in order to fully understand the intricacies of the post work process. This in itself is becoming increasingly multidimensional due to the length of years spent in retirement, often as a couple, and the issues which successive decades bring, especially in terms of declining health and cognition problems. The topic of health in retirement, both psychological and physiological, is well documented and serves to illustrate the positive and negative consequences of ageing. The following section now considers effective ways of adapting to the ageing process in order to maximise the benefits of wellbeing.

### **3.4 Successful ageing**

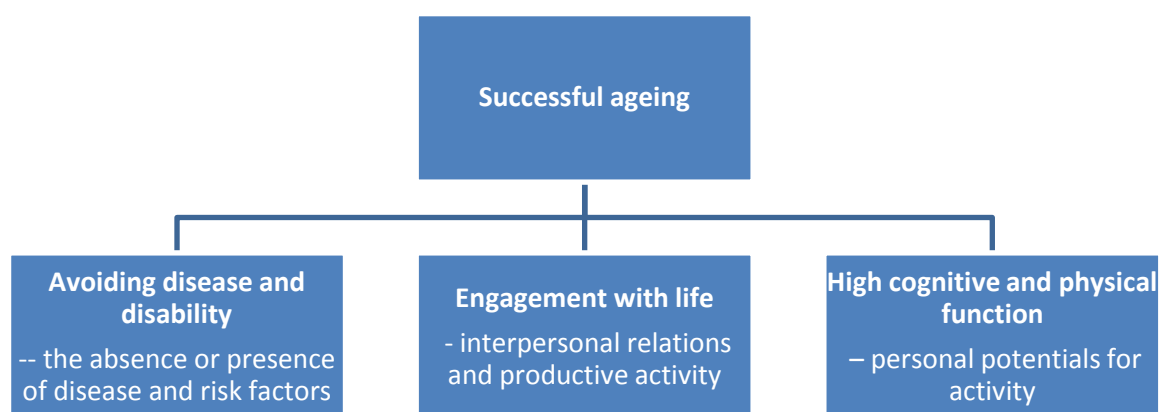
The concept of successful ageing is dynamic in nature and therefore a constantly evolving phenomenon. It is multidimensional with roots lying

in both psychosocial and biomedical fields, which when fused together produce a domain that focusses on the human life span and the length of time that is spent 'healthy' within this framework.

Many forces come into play when analysing how individuals engage with healthy ageing, such as personality, financial situation and marital status, but according to most gerontologists the central component is to remain involved and active. There are a plethora of related terms used to illustrate wellbeing during the retirement years in addition to successful ageing such as positive ageing, ageing well, healthy ageing and active ageing. Common to all is the theory that wellbeing in older adults is a process which results in maximising a good quality of life by minimising the negative physical and mental health issues of ageing and encouraging the enjoyment of an independent lifestyle. As Naaldenberg et al (2012, p. 713) illustrate, a 'salutogenic perspective' is crucial in order to focus on the means by which people remain healthy. This viewpoint is centred on the way people have increased control over their health by self-constructing a more productive and active lifestyle; this links back to the theory of Positive Psychology as outlined in section 2.3 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

All of the previous terms are succinctly encapsulated in the highly influential definition of Rowe and Kahn (1997) who interpret successful ageing as low disease, high functioning ability and sustained engagement with life.

**Figure 3.2 Successful ageing model based on the concept of Rowe and Kahn (1997)**



Their pioneering work has helped to dispel the myth that old age is a time of sickness, diminished cognitive powers and sedentary pastimes. Emphasis is placed on lifestyle factors as determinants of health risks in older age as advancing years reduce the contribution of genetic factors. Maintaining a combination of cognitive and physical functions based on personal capabilities coupled with active social engagement increases the likelihood of experiencing successful ageing. Retirement enforces the loss of a ready-made group of social contacts found in the workplace and a

framework of employment based activity. Therefore Rowe and Kahn's theory suggests the need for a twofold engagement of connectedness to others and to interests during the ageing process in order to reap positive health benefits through a network of social support and positive pursuits. The relevance of their research for this current study lies in the concept that successful ageing involves some form of supportive activity, particularly relationships with others and constructive occupations.

In order to assist in focussing on the various biological, social and psychological issues relevant to the differing stages of ageing, some gerontologists subdivide old age into three phases (Forman et al, 1992), namely young old (60 – 69 years), middle old (70 – 79 years) and old old (80 years plus). One particular health problem which can span all of these age groups and is highly relevant to studies in music and ageing, concerns presbycusis/age related hearing loss (ARHL). Presbycusis is very common amongst retirees and can seriously affect life quality by denying older people the ability to hear distinctly and therefore inhibit engagement in meaningful activities (Gates & Mills, 2005). Up to forty percent of the young old population in the US are hearing impaired and this rises to sixty six percent amongst the middle old and eighty percent in the old old bracket. An empirical study by Pronk, Deeg and Kramer (2013) investigated the association between hearing loss decline and a

decrease in psychosocial health. Their results indicated that the strongest link was found in those recently widowed due to the combined effects of emotional loneliness from the loss of a partner and increased social isolation brought on by ARHL. From a positive perspective they found that spending more time in social interaction served as an effective coping mechanism. This is reinforced by a study into on-line support for sufferers of hearing loss by Cummings, Sproull and Kiesler (2002) who reported that the support of close family and friends is crucial in helping to manage the negative results of auditory decline. This therefore indicates that support from a partner can be highly effective during the retirement years and further research is needed into this key aspect of relationships and health and wellbeing. The progression of this affliction through old age suggests the need for audiologists to further develop processes which will facilitate improved rehabilitative systems in order for sufferers of ARHL to be able to fully engage in daily life activities, experience increased motivation and raise their quality of life in retirement (Li-Korotky, 2012).

Many scholarly studies have shown a relationship between productive activities with positive ageing, good health and wellbeing (Everard et al, 2000; Franklin & Tate, 2009; Stephens & Flick, 2010). Paganini Hill, Kawas and Corrada (2011) conducted a study into the link between

physical activity and mortality in what could be described as the elderly old. Despite the limitations of self-reported results by solely middle-class participants results were conclusive in suggesting that engagement in active leisure time pursuits positively contributes to a healthier lifestyle. Having an active participation in life gives agency to individuals and increases their satisfaction and happiness levels which in turn assist in the development of a successful ageing process. Kahana, Kahana and Kercher (2003) suggest that through proactive engagement older adults can experience successful ageing by shaping their own future and thereby facilitate a better life quality. Another study supporting this view was conducted by Dosman et al (2006) in which diary data was collected to compare and contrast the allocation of time devoted to activities pre and post retirement. Results concluded that retirees continue with productive engagement on leaving the work force, however there is an acknowledgement of the crucial need to further comprehend the nature of Third Age productive activities in order to keep people from burdening society.

There is some support for the continuity theory which advocates a framework whereby individuals choose to preserve and maintain the existing relationship between leisure pursuits in early life and after retirement. It suggests that those who are able to preserve their lifelong

activities into the Third Age are able to age positively through the retention of their agentic position and consequent preservation of their personal identity (Howe, 1987; Atchley, 1989). Successful ageing is heavily dependent on people's construction of self and abilities to enact their agency. Culturally old age has been associated with dependency and decrepitude however in today's society retirees have the opportunities to reject this notion and adopt the position of productive and active members of society. Research by Ready, Carvalho and Åkerstedt (2012) demonstrates how older adults' self-concept is multi-faceted as they replace the more traditional roles such as that of parenting and working, with other activities, potentially due to the presence of more freedom. Despite the small sample size of predominantly women in their study the results encourage further research into the dynamic nature of self-concept along the life timeline and its link with specific activities. In a qualitative investigation by Jolanki (2009, p. 215) into agency as an 'interactional phenomenon', groups of adults aged seventy and over were interviewed and asked to describe their thoughts on health, relationships and social activities. One of the findings illustrates that older individuals are able to perceive themselves as having the ability to take control of their lives and take on a plethora of new identities through the pursuit of healthy activities. However as the author points out the potential exists for self-regulation to be the domain of the fit and active, leaving the

physically impaired and dependent elderly to be defined as old and without an agentic position.

It is therefore important that research considers studies which can offer insights into successful ageing for all irrespective of their physical condition. In a study by Reichstadt et al (2007) focus groups of retired adults were questioned on many aspects of ageing in order to solicit views and thoughts on what it means to age 'successfully'. Interestingly a positive attitude was cited as compensation for poor physical health and whilst good health was mentioned there were mixed views on its necessity for success in ageing. Emphasis was placed on psychosocial factors through engagement with others and the environment and thereby facilitating a sense of mental stimulation, feeling needed and having a purpose in life. Taking these results into account would strengthen the argument for research into the positive effects of less physically focussed activities such as musical engagement and associated links with others through intimate partnership support.

### **3.5 Relationship health in the Third Age**

Humans are social beings with diverse sets of relationship patterns and interaction with others is a key aspect of social life. However, what keeps couples together and what part do meaningful and shared activities play



in the maintenance of strong, healthy partnerships? With the majority of people maintaining their social identity as part of a couple it is important to study their interaction and increase the knowledge base of how intimate pairings affect and shape each other's leisure time activities.

In a study by Barnes and Parry (2004) marital satisfaction was found in couples who have successfully continued the engagement with their leisure pursuits prior to and after retirement. This illustrates a key point that continuity throughout the lifespan provides a supportive framework for identities and thereby enhances the feeling of harmony and wellbeing. As stated at the start of the chapter this investigation is unique in approaching the subject of spousal interaction within musical behaviours, however it is interesting to observe the results from other scholarly studies which examine this influence within other areas of activity. Barnett, Guell and Ogilvie (2013) conducted a qualitative research study into how couples influence each other's physical activities in retirement with the result that despite differences in attitudes and low joint participation, spousal support was deemed to be key for the commencement and maintenance of a regular exercise programme.

Later life relationships can experience periods of strain especially immediately after retirement when couples have to adapt to new routines

and gender roles within the partnership. However many scholarly studies support the theory that attachment through marriage brings happiness and therefore provides a means of support and a link with health and wellbeing (Argyle, 1996). In a study conducted by Hughes and Waite (2009) into the relationship between marriage and health at midlife, results concluded that those who had suffered from marital disruption through divorce or widowhood demonstrate poorer health than those currently married. Chronic conditions and mobility limitations are particularly affected by previous marital disturbances whilst psychological problems such as depression are more linked to current marital status. With more than twelve million people in the UK over the age of sixty contemporary studies indicate a positive correlation between those who are married and lifespan longevity (Jaffe et al 2006). One reason for this correlation result is that such an intimate social relationship can have a positive effect on happiness (Diener & Seligman, 2004); Vanderhorst and McLaren, 2005) by ensuring that each partner experiences feelings of safety, security, support and affection (Hagerty, Williams, & Oe, 2002). In his book on happiness, Nettle (2005) reports that a key finding in wellbeing research is that those who are married provide a higher happiness scoring than those who are not. This supports other studies, such as the RIAS Over 50s Satisfaction Index (2014), which indicates that despite an overall drop in the satisfaction level of this age

group those in retirement who are attached through marriage are inclined to be more contented than those who are single. This is partly due to the engagement of spouses in nurturing each other's wellbeing (Rauer, Sabey & Jensen, 2014). The index therefore demonstrates a key link between marriage and emotional satisfaction highlighting a need for further insights into partnership support and associated feelings of wellness.

Research suggests that the curvilinear course of marital happiness has been found to result in a rise in satisfaction during the Third Age with a high rate of happiness (Schwartz & Olds, 2000). According to Waite (1995), marriage brings substantial health rewards with the most positive benefits being found in long term stable marriages. Her research suggests that marriage lengthens life by reducing negative behaviours, encouraging feelings of wellbeing through the provision of joint finances, providing a system of support and an accessible at home intimate partner. Stanton (1997) states that married individuals experience higher levels of psychological and physical health than those who are single. Focussing on additional extensive research she reports that people who engage in social connections live longer and healthier lives and therefore the most robust method of experiencing social interaction is to be married. Epidemiological research undertaken by health psychologists

report significant findings in this field and as shown in the previous paragraph concur that the stability of a social identity through marriage produces a higher degree of longevity than separated, divorced and single states (Sbarra & Nietert, 2009; Ross, Mirowsky & Goldsteen, 1990). Therefore it appears that continuity in its many forms, from close partnerships to lifelong leisure pursuits, provides a source of support and feeling of wellbeing.

Pienta, Hayward and Jenkins (2000) further this research by questioning whether the impact of these health benefits are found equally across differing demographic and population groupings, especially in today's society where increasing numbers of retirees are ageing within non marital relationships given the rise in divorce and co-habitation. Empirical work by Scherger, Nazroo and Higgs (2011) into links between pastimes and the Third Age suggests that the existence of an at home partner shapes one's wishes and opportunities to engage socially. In other words, unlike single people, retired married people who desire social interaction do not feel compelled to do so outside the home environment. These researchers make recommendations for further qualitative studies into the leisure and cultural aspects of this age group with particular reference to the comparison between solitary and social pursuits. Their work also suggests the need for further differentiation between various

areas of activity. This has relevance for the current study as it poses the question of the importance of music within a dyadic relationship and its use within the home, especially in later life when mobility becomes an issue.

### **3.6 Chapter conclusions**

Given the massive rise in the number of people living well into old age and the potential drain on government financial and health resources, the subject of how to keep retirees fit and active is a pertinent one as addressed in this chapter. The current investigation is centred on retired couples who are fit and active. Therefore the importance of the above scholarly studies is key to the understanding of the need for further research into the relevance of meaningful activities in retirement and their role in the health of marital relationships. As demonstrated, many scholarly studies exist to support the theory that whilst being a major life changing event, retirement can be perceived to be more of a process than a defining moment. To this end pre-retirement activities are highly relevant to the understanding of the nature of retirement and its links with wellbeing.

Health issues can impact significantly on individuals' abilities to take part in certain activities and the problem of presbycusis is significant in

the study of pastimes such as music which are totally reliant on hearing. Some studies indicate that happiness and positivity during retirement are linked to good health but as shown in the study by Reichstadt et al (2007), for some, maintaining a social identity through engagement with others and feeling wanted are of more importance. Many individuals continue to participate in hobbies and pastimes which have been significant to them throughout their lives and this suggests that these provide feelings of continuity and security. Empirical studies highlight the social constructionist theory of communal interaction which demonstrates the need for retirees to take control of their lives and achieve greater strength of personal agency. Through the freedom to choose leisure activities and the desired level of social engagement, individuals can forge a purposeful role for themselves in society and attain a sense of positivity and feelings of happiness.

Marital status also appears to have an impact on the level of satisfaction experienced in retirement. Scholarly investigations and surveys reveal that a greater degree of contentment is afforded to those with an intimate attachment to a significant other in marriage. One particular reason for this is that a stable marriage can offer security and support and therefore deliver a purpose to life, the feeling of being loved and needed, and provide a companion to share life's experiences.

### 3.7 Summary of literature reviews

In summary, these two literature review chapters have drawn together two aspects within the research domain which are central to this investigation, namely music and ageing. As illustrated, successful ageing is first and foremost concerned with the promotion and maintenance of physical, mental and social health which ensures a good quality of life. Engagement with music in the retirement years improves feelings of wellness and assists in putting coping strategies in place when times become difficult. Combining this knowledge with our awareness of the benefits of intimate couple pairings, the evidence base for the use of musical participation amongst retirees should provide valuable insights into the multifaceted benefits of music as a therapeutic intervention and bonding agent in older age partnerships. As demonstrated in these two chapters, the role of music in personal relationships has not been researched widely therefore the main aim of this study is largely exploratory. Hence this makes it a timely and necessary investigation given the importance of relationships and family dynamics, the need to promote successful ageing strategies and the growing interest in the therapeutic uses of the arts.

In the following two chapters I give a detailed account of the theoretical framework and research method employed in this investigation.

# CHAPTER 4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

## 4.1 Overview and rationale for the use of a qualitative approach

This chapter covers the theoretical structure which is central to this investigation. I begin by charting a historical overview of the underpinnings of qualitative research procedures and philosophies previously and currently in use in psychological research. I continue by debating the use of qualitative as opposed to quantitative methodologies and include examples of the various approaches on offer. The chapter continues with an explanation of phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography which constitute the philosophical foundations of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, the chosen methodology for this current study. The last section examines the recent founding of IPA, its significance to this investigation, followed by thoughts on embodiment and a critique of IPA, finally concluding with a summary of the chapter contents.

## 4.2 Historical perspectives in qualitative methodology

Historically the standard view of science emanates from a philosophical approach termed 'positivism'. Founded by Auguste Comte in the nineteenth century it sought to utilise epistemological observations and scientific philosophies to 'reduce qualities of human experience to quantifiable variables' (Charmaz 2009, p. 83 - 84). It was Comte's belief



that human thought flows through three stages: theological, metaphysical and ultimately positive though retaining a constant belief in scientific logic and objectivity. Whilst fundamentally positivists sought to understand the world through mapping the relationship between variables, it can be argued that their methodology had limitations when dealing with humans in social contexts as they failed to examine the differential between the characteristics and perceptions of the observer and the observed. The need to remain objective and retain a distance between themselves and the observed avoided biases and resulted in generalizable outcomes devoid of subjective interpretation.

Qualitative psychologists reasoned that human beings were not inanimate objects who could function according to the laws of causality and many scientists came to reject the positivist paradigm in order to focus on the human narrative of everyday lived experiences (Ashworth, 2008). These scholars who became known as anti-positivists, were motivated by the nineteenth century German Romantic movement led by Dilthey and Rickert; the former postulating that human social life and interaction could only be explained through *verstehen* or interpretive understanding. He further promoted the *lebensphilosophie*, or 'philosophy of life', which was rooted in the extensive and highly complex nature of the lived phenomenon itself (Weinberg, 2008). Dilthey thereby

highlighted the human science stance which focussed on understanding the world of the individual rather than the natural science objective of observing causal relationships. Weber continued the work of Dilthey and introduced the term 'anti-positivism', arguing that all research in the world of sociology must focus on interpretative rather than empiricist methods. For Weber, human science enquiry demanded that research must concentrate on individual interpretations of actions and experiences, taking into account all cultural values, namely rules, symbols, meanings, norms and values (Crotty, 1998).

#### 4.3 Quantitative v qualitative dichotomy

*'Within contemporary psychology those who wish to investigate the person's grasp of their world in detail will tend to turn to qualitative methods.'* (Ashworth 2008, p. 5)

The qualitative/quantitative dichotomy is continually being examined by psychologists with an assumption existing that the two approaches differ in their accuracy in validating their findings. According to Mays and Pope (1995) all research is dependent on accumulating specific types of evidence through the spectrum of particular methods, each having its strengths and weaknesses. Quantitative research can be easily evaluated through rigorous conventions and rules. Sources for similarly rigorous approaches within qualitative research are now on offer, however according to Barbour (2001, pg. 1115) 'technical fixes' need to be rooted in

a wider understanding of the rationale and philosophical meanings behind qualitative research if they are to be effective. Hermeneutics, which is covered in detail in section 4.6, and pragmatism, are two key overarching philosophies of scientific inquiry that turn to the lived world and stress the importance of self-reflection. Pragmatism focusses on experience as an active, constantly evolving phenomenon (Heelan & Schulkin, 1998) embracing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to suit the purpose of the research, whereas hermeneutics has an ontological background, prioritising meanings and is found primarily within the humanities utilising qualitative research methods.

A key strength of qualitative research lies in its flexibility to advance further into the meaning of a phenomenon and construct a highly detailed interpretation of what is happening (Chamberlain, 2000). Qualitative research tends to focus on meaning, implications and communicative action. That is, it looks at how people make sense of what happens and the meaning of that happening: within this wide ranging area many alternative methodologies are available (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Therefore the qualitative researcher will be drawn to an approach which focuses most appropriately on the subject under investigation.

In assessing the most suitable research method for this study into the role of music within social relations in retirement it was essential to consider how to find a systematic explanation of what happens when individuals interact with music. There are substantial differences in the way quantitative and qualitative data are analysed. The more rigid numerical approach offered by the former forbids the in depth study of personal and social experiences of participants which is a critical component of this study. To gain additional perspectives on the research question a mixed methods approach could have been used to provide greater diversity of viewpoints and stronger conclusions (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). One note of caution however, is that the combined use of qualitative and quantitative methods is only useful if they facilitate better opportunities to answer the research questions (i.e. pragmatism). As quantitative analysis is nomothetic it focuses on population means, clearly targeting a more substantial number of participants and therefore obtaining a larger amount of homogenised views. If an investigation is centred around individualism and the detailed interpretation of a specific phenomenon, as in the case of this study, then a qualitative approach has to be central to the inquiry.

As mentioned above there are many methodologies which can be employed in the qualitative field, such as grounded theory and discourse

analysis (Smith, 2009), however Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen for this study and arguments for its employment can be found in section 4.8.

There has been a major shift in recent years towards phenomenological psychology (Arvidson, 2014; Langdridge, 2007) as it affords valuable descriptive accounts of the phenomenon being studied. It facilitates the discovery of lived experience and integrates the traditions of hermeneutics and phenomenology to reveal the qualities of a phenomenon. This assists a more profound holistic understanding of a lived phenomenon (Nicol, 2010) which is essential when monitoring the complete picture.

#### **4.4 Qualitative methodologies**

As this particular investigation is deeply rooted in human psychological enquiry a qualitative design has been utilised. Grounded theory, discourse, thematic and narrative analysis (Smith, 2009) are among the many qualitative approaches on offer in psychological investigations, all of which exist within a phenomenological framework, and an overview of these now follows.

#### **4.4.1 Grounded Theory**

Grounded theory was developed in order to summarise the elements of experience through a structured procedure and to develop theory. The researcher is able to comprehend the nature and significance of an experience by generating a theory from data, in other words the theory is grounded in the data. Founded by Glaser and Strauss in the 1960s, as well as deriving its hypotheses and concepts from the data, it also systematically works them out in relation to the data throughout the research procedure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). No procedural stages are formulated in advance and therefore the fundamental objective is to build an integrated theory (Charmaz, 2009; Moustakas, 1994). It is a rigorous approach which utilises theoretical sampling in order to further develop the theory and incorporates saturation when no new or relevant data emerges. The strength of this method lies in its ability to focus on areas of research where the theoretical approach selected is vague or non-existent, however no research can commence without some degree of prior knowledge and hypotheses which is often implicit.

#### **4.4.2 Discourse Analysis**

Focusing on language, discourse analysis presumes that humans utilise language to fashion the world as they see it, and according to circumstances and interests (Coolican, 2004). This branch of qualitative

analysis has increased in popularity in recent times and is concerned with what humans do with speech and the written word and the types of 'resources that people draw on in the course of these practices' (Potter & Wetherell 1995, p. 81). The discourse paradigm within psychology consists of two approaches: discursive psychology and Foucauldian discourse analysis. The former deals with interpersonal exchange whereas Foucauldian discourse analysis is more concerned with the relationship between communication, subjectivity, practices and the material context in which such experiences occur (Willig, 2008).

#### **4.4.3 Thematic analysis**

This branch of qualitative analysis involves the formation of categories or themes emerging from collected data within interviews. These themes can relate to patterns of behaviour, thought and lifestyle thereby exhibiting an element of quantification, in that examples of certain behaviours are packaged together. Resultant sub themes allow the researcher to obtain a complete view of the data. There is a link between thematic analysis and grounded theory in that the themes emerge from the narrative. However the latter is a methodology which is reliant on a theoretically formed framework in order to construct a valid argument for the choice of themes grounded in the data, whereas thematic analysis is considered to be a highly flexible approach utilised to collect and analyse

information which is not wedded to any specific theoretical structure (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

#### **4.4.4 Narrative analysis**

This interview - based form of qualitative analysis takes the participant's 'story' as the object of investigation. It is a prime way for individuals to make sense of their experience by moulding it into narrative' (Riessman, 1993). It is therefore highly compatible with research into subjectivity and identity. The primary source of material is rooted in the narrative interview with analysis being based on descriptive and interpretive accounts. Floersch et al (2010) suggest that the framework of narrative analysis is difficult to define and despite being utilised in multiple disciplines no universal understanding is evident as many different perspectives and methods have developed. However the key features of narrative analysis are its emphasis on the transient nature and categorisation of shared experiences and the systematic interpretation of stories. Thus the focus is on the way humans categorise and thereby make sense of life events (Willig, 2010).

#### **4.5 Investigation approach**

After careful consideration the decision was made to employ a phenomenological approach, namely Interpretative Phenomenological



Analysis and the reasons for the choice of this specific qualitative methodology are found in section 4.8.2. IPA is a phenomenological method which has its roots embedded in three significant areas of philosophy: phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography and I will outline the importance of these areas in this chapter. Investigations structured around phenomenological inquiry are heavily influenced by the writing of thinkers such as Husserl and Heidegger and it is important to comprehend the meanings of their philosophies in order to fully understand the underpinnings of IPA. Therefore in this section I consider the path of phenomenological history and how it has influenced the course of psychological inquiry in the field of lived experiences and consciousness.

The word phenomenology comes from the Greek 'phainomenon' meaning appearance and refers to the study of appearances as opposed to reality. Any phenomenological inquiry will concentrate on an in-depth detailing of conscious experience: the life world of participants and their explanations of the mundane lived experience are at the very heart of this approach. A basic form of phenomenology emerged in the work of Franz Brentano in the nineteenth century, who in *Psychologie vom empirischen Standpunkt* (1874) proposed that a key property of conscious activity is its intentionality, whereby a distinction is made between psychological

and physical phenomena: a feature of all mental states being its direction towards something, such as beliefs focussing on affairs of state (Bertram, Moses & Baldwin, 2001). The term intentionality refers to the philosophy that some things are about other things, for example an idea or belief can be about a cup of tea, but a cup of tea is not about anything. It is this theory which according to Brentano separates the mental from the physical and only mental phenomena exhibit intentionality. This is further described in the next section under the work of Husserl.

#### **4.5.1 Husserl**

One of Brentano's students, Edmund Husserl, is credited with being the father of phenomenological philosophy. As a qualified scientist and philosopher working in the early twentieth century, he created a rigorous, philosophical framework which he proposed could be applied to all academic disciplines within both the arts and the humanities.

Husserl's work on transcendental phenomenology was concerned with human consciousness which, whilst being a key basis for our source of knowledge, must transcend the limitations of our mundane lived experiences in order to discover an underlying reality (Husserl & Welton, 1999). His theories concentrated on analysing mental experience rather than behaviour, with an emphasis on describing conscious experience

while suspending or bracketing out all suppositions and explanations of the world. To do this a situation would be found in which individuals 'have first-hand experiences that they can describe as they actually took place in their life' (Giorgi & Giorgi 2008, p. 28). Husserl was concerned with how the world is experienced by humans in differing contexts, surroundings and times rather than general theoretical descriptions of the world. For him, our world of objects and subjects cannot be disconnected from our experiences.

The key features of Husserl's work can be divided into three central concepts of thought: essence, life-world and intentionality. Life-world is the inner historical place of every living human individual: the only real domain which encompasses the social, cultural and phenomenal world (Smith, 1995). In order to access this life world, individuals must reflect and interpret their everyday lived experiences and embrace a phenomenological stance in order to gain access to the meaning of their lived encounters (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Essence or eidos of the phenomenon refers to the sum of all possible insightful methods of knowing the phenomenon as it appears to the individual in their engagement with that experience (Willig, 2010). This is further discussed later in this section. The third concept is intentionality which concerns the perception of objects as phenomena. It encourages the unification of

'self' and the 'world' so that they are no-longer viewed as two separate entities. Through phenomenological thought individuals move away from external objects and adopt a deeper awareness of the fundamentals of the experience. For Husserl, intentionality was a major concept in his theory of 'transcendental phenomenology' (Moustakas 1994, p. 28) asserting that consciousness awareness and the object of consciousness are intentionally linked and that this is the foundation of all mental experience.

From the phenomenological perspective intentionality can be divided into two elements: noema and noesis. Noema refers to the phenomenon itself and noesis concerns the manner in which the phenomenon is actually experienced. To identify the meaning of an act or the individual's 'sense' of an object is described as the noema of an act and lends itself to experiences which can be shared. The meaning or interpretive essence of the act is known as the noesis and this constitutes the unique experience of an act which can be viewed in profoundly different ways by different people (McIntyre & Smith, 1989). Therefore one phenomenon experienced by several people will be interpreted in different ways due to their individual points of reference and mental orientation.

Two key areas of Husserl's work concerning the eidos of a phenomenon which have had a direct influence on IPA are eidetic reduction and

transcendental reduction. His philosophy encouraged constant examination of a lived experience in an attempt to reveal what was at its very core. Through eidetic reduction one is able to subjectively consider a particular phenomenon and through imaginative variation deduce what can be eliminated while the experience still remains itself. Utilising this technique the essential features of a phenomenon can be established (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Husserlian philosophy extended this tenet to include transcendental reduction which is an iterative examination of the core of consciousness through repeated process of inquiry and description. In this instance, as referred to earlier in this chapter, a transcendental attitude is concerned with epoché which involves temporarily bracketing out any prior or intuitive basis of knowledge as independent of experience. Thereby all biases and presuppositions can be transcended and a state of pre-reflective consciousness is achieved which facilitates a detailed description of the world as it is known to the individual (Willig, 2010). The relevance of epoché or bracketing to IPA is discussed in section 4.5.2.

In summary, Husserl's philosophical work focussed on the importance of experience and how that experience is perceived. His interests lay in the description of the world through reflection, and by bracketing out beliefs associated with one's natural attitude he sought to uncover the essence of

experience. Husserl was essentially a descriptive phenomenologist, and whilst it is agreed that interpretation plays an important role in his work, his key focus rested on description with interpretation being seen as a form of description (Willig, 2010). One of the theoretical foundations of IPA stems from the endeavours of Husserl to form a 'philosophical science of consciousness' (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008) alongside the hermeneutical theory of interpretation and the centrality of the meanings which individuals ascribe to events through symbolic-interactionism. IPA has drawn much from his work, principally the process of reflection, the examination of consciousness and the lived experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I now continue to look at the theories of Martin Heidegger, who is considered to be a key exponent of existentialism and whose work provided some important ideas for IPA.

#### **4.5.2 Heidegger and Existentialist Phenomenology**

In his writings, the philosopher, Jean Paul Sartre (1945), defines existentialism as a belief in man being what he is, without any greater purpose, ultimate meaning or pre-determined plan. It is man's freedom to choose his individual significance which is the key to existence. The existentialist movement blossomed after the horrors of the Second World War where the ideals of good and evil were seriously threatened, and focused on the individual as a free agent who is encumbered by personal

responsibility and inevitable suffering. Whilst never claiming to be an existentialist, the German philosopher Martin Heidegger, an assistant of Husserl, is considered to be a key thinker in formal existentialism (Spinelli, 2005) and a proponent of phenomenological existentialism.

Heidegger moved away from the more Husserlian transcendental approach to phenomenology towards a more existential and hermeneutic method. He emphasised the life-world (Ashworth, 2008) and his work 'Being and Time' forms the bedrock of his theories, examining how humans enter the world of sense-making. Heidegger showed an interest in the philosophical writings of early existentialists such as Nietzsche and Kierkegaard and, taking the existentialist phenomenological approach, posited that existence as it is humanly experienced overrides the transcendental view which focusses on the essence of life (Spinelli, 2005). Thus he did not distance himself from phenomenology but rather approached it from a more enhanced interpretative stance, questioning whether knowledge actually exists outside of interpretation (Dahlstrom, 2011; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

It was Heidegger's belief that meanings resulted from the interaction between individuals and their world. For him, humans and their environment were permanently connected within a cultural, social and

historical framework (Lavery, 2003). In his major work 'Being and Time' Heidegger introduced the concept of Dasein, which can literally be translated as 'existence is always being-in-the-world', therefore humans are referred to as Dasein because they are defined by the fact of their existence in the world. To be human means to be embedded and submersed into the physical, factual and material day to day world. By using the expression Dasein, Heidegger suggests that humans cannot be considered except as being existent in a world amongst other things, therefore Dasein means 'being there' and 'there' constitutes the world (Warnock 1970, p. 50). This approach is ontological in nature as it questions existence itself focussing on how meaning emanates from this.

There is a disparity in the Husserlian and Heideggerian approach to epoché as the latter does not advocate the use of bracketing out presuppositions as they are essential to the existence of Dasein and a vital component in interpreting phenomena. Heidegger regarded the researcher as Being-in-the-World of the participant and as an equal, arguing that interpretive research could not exist without the judgement and views of the researcher. He termed this prior knowledge and understanding, fore-structure or fore-conception (McConnell-Henry, Chapman & Francis, 2009).



IPA research has derived much from Heidegger's work, in particular the perspective that humans exist entirely 'in the world' and it is not possible to disconnect from all the associated facets of worldly existence. Emanating from this is the understanding that bracketing or putting aside all presuppositions, prejudices and prior knowledge ahead of an enquiry is unworkable. IPA analysts therefore understand that all questioning and interpretation contain beliefs based on previous experience and as a result a phenomenon can never be revealed in its entirety. Heidegger strongly insisted that all questioning carries certain presumptions which govern the enquiry and even 'predetermine to a certain extent what can be discovered' (Moran 2000, p. 237).

Phenomenology has had a profound influence on the progress of qualitative analysis and has provided the framework for many interpretive research methods. I now proceed to describe the second significant area which has heavily influenced IPA, that of hermeneutics: the theory of interpretation.

#### **4.6 Hermeneutics**

The background of hermeneutics is embedded in the work of theologians who strove to strengthen the foundations of Biblical interpretations and was used in the nineteenth century by Dilthey, as mentioned earlier in

this chapter, to describe the study of interpretation through human intentions and meanings. As all social science research involves interpretation, aspects of hermeneutics are present in many facets of research. Ricoeur (1974) distinguished between two forms of hermeneutics: the hermeneutics of meaning or recollection which points towards the truth behind experience and the hermeneutics of suspicion which seeks a further reality that exists behind the subject being analysed. Smith and Osborn (2009) view these two forms as a double hermeneutic approach by embracing the researcher and the researched as equals in the understanding of a phenomenon and resultant communication of the interpretation through empathy and questioning.

Hermeneutic psychological inquiry is concerned with the understanding and meaning of an experiential text and seeks clarification of the object under scrutiny through critical engagement (Myers, 2008). Participant narratives are highly suited to this hermeneutic approach as participant accounts disclose personal stories which are central to self-perception and identity. The aim of this interpretation is to reveal an underlying sense of coherence or understanding (Taylor, 1976). Hermeneutic interpretation tightly knits together the researcher with the context and meaning of the narratives being studied hence the analysis procedure is one of close collaboration between the researcher and the participant. The

researcher's own biases and suppositions have a distinct impact on how the world is viewed and these are crucial to the interpretative procedure. Unlike phenomenological inquiry, the hermeneutical approach regards these assumptions as essential to the process of interpretation (Lavery, 2003) and each interpretation is a legitimate, subjective entity. This can be traced back to the work of Heidegger as described in the previous section.

The third significant influence on IPA is idiography which focusses on the distinct pattern of features and predispositions of an individual, making up the uniqueness of every human being.

#### **4.7 Idiography**

'Idiographic' comes from the Greek word 'idios' which is defined as private or personal hence idiographic psychology deals with the distinctiveness of the individual. The term idiography was first articulated by the German philosopher Windelbrand in the early 1900s to distinguish between idiographic and nomothetic methods. Idiography contrasts with the nomothetic approach as it relates to individual behaviour being the result of general rules which govern human personality (Ashworth, 2008).

Nomothetic analysis concentrates on examining data from participants without exploring the exclusiveness of each individual and this manifests itself in producing measurements in the form of numbers through aggregation and inferential statistics (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The shortcoming of this approach is that it provides superficial understanding of the individual and is therefore suited to more general large scale inquiries. The American personality psychologist Gordon Allport, believed that the outstanding characteristic of man is his individuality (Nicholson, 1998) and that the psychology of personality was defining itself too much as a nomothetic discipline and not enough as an idiographic one and should embrace the two.

Many would argue that the idiographic approach would offer a flexible alternative to group comparison designs and help to track down 'intersubject variability and isolating factors responsible for this variability' (Barlow & Nock 2009, p. 20). Comparison of inter-case studies can indicate meaningful patterns within a shared experience (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). Certainly this more detailed individualistic approach lends itself to a fuller understanding of the person and their involvement with a particular phenomenon, and this in turn can lead to larger experimental studies of general human behavioural patterns.

So far there can be seen many limitations to the adoption of the positivist paradigm for this study. A dualism would exist between the observer and the observed resulting in nomothetic statements and context free generalisations. An argument has therefore been made for the use of a naturalist qualitative paradigm for my research study as it affords the flexibility of comprehending the many facets of the role of music within social relationships. This next section states the case for the use of IPA in this thesis through a description of the method and reasons for its suitability.

## **4.8 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

### **4.8.1 Introduction**

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis has both a long and a recent history, drawing much from the work of Husserl through its descriptive stance, but even more from the theories of Heidegger's interpretative hermeneutic inquiry. As with any phenomenological approach its main aim is to describe people's subjective experiences as they are lived (Crotty, 1996). As previously outlined, its origins are firmly embedded in philosophies born in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however as a methodology in its own right it is a comparatively recent experiential qualitative approach cultivated within the psychology domain. Its founder Jonathan Smith acknowledges that its roots are situated within

phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography as it focuses on understanding lived experiences and how individuals make sense of these experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

It first emerged in a publication by Smith in *Psychology and Health* (1996) proposing a psychological approach which incorporated the heuristic and qualitative within mainstream psychology. The rationale being that psychology was in need of its own qualitative approach rather than relying on those from other fields. Initially it was widely used in health, clinical and social psychology mainly in the UK but in recent times has been employed by researchers globally and in other health, human and social science disciplines. I consider IPA to be a methodology in its entirety as not only can it be viewed as a data collection process but, as described earlier in this chapter, it has strong philosophical underpinnings and a robust procedure for analysis, interpretation and presentation of results.

One significant difference between IPA and other forms of qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory and thematic analysis is its double hermeneutic approach thereby producing a dual approach to analysis. IPA deals with single cases within a small group, comparing them and constructing common themes. IPA utilises the concept of the

hermeneutic circle (Guignon, 1993) which was first developed by Heidegger in the 1920s in order to facilitate the understanding of external phenomena by entering on the path of the circle and interpreting the phenomena in their entirety whilst still observing other meanings which may or not be concealed. Gadamer (Lavery, 2003) furthered this philosophy by describing the circle as an iterative process reliant on conversation and intellectual communication with others. This can be observed in IPA analysis through the constant moving back and forth and continued reflection on parts and the whole of the text.

#### **4.8.2 Significance of IPA usage in this study**

IPA proved to be an essential tool in the construction of my investigation as I was keen to adopt a methodology which placed the interpretation of an individual's perspective of their lived experience at its core. I appreciated that retirement, partnership relationships and positive activities are all significant life experiences and through IPA's idiographic approach I was able to seek detailed accounts from participants and ascribe meaning to their experiences when viewed through their own lenses. For any research investigation to be meaningful it is essential to have a coherent link between the philosophical foundations, the aims of the study and the methods of data collection and analysis. I found IPA's interpretivistic approach, naturalistic methodology and inductive nature

afforded me, as the researcher, to collaborate with the participants and construct a meaningful reality. Utilising a subjective epistemology I was able to forge a link with the participants which permitted this dual dimensional approach to facilitate, through my understanding of the world, the analysis of their experiences and perceptions.

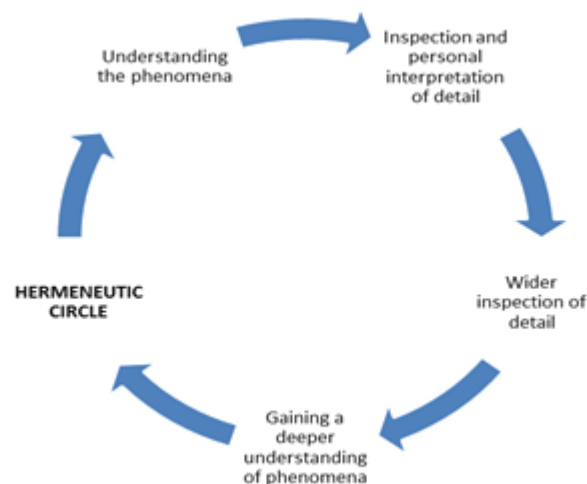
In reflecting on the various choices of methodology I had to consider which would be the most effective approach to study the detailed examination of personal relationships within marriage, the formation of a joint musical identity and the centrality of musical experience within the union. Knowledge of IPA's key features concerning the role of the researcher, the size and demographics of my sample and the personalisation of music within relationship identities assisted my choice as I was keen to analyse highly detailed narratives from a small group of participants. Although some other qualitative approaches emphasize the importance of language, the orientation within IPA is more towards the meaning of phenomena from a personal, rather than a social perspective. The emergence of IPA in recent years has shown it to be a rigorous qualitative methodology, simplistic in nature but with a paradoxical flexibility that explores the complexities of human experience (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). It shares much with other grounded phenomenological methodologies and allows for rich interpretation of



each participant and his or her beliefs and thoughts. IPA facilitates the combination of interviewer reflexivity and the participants' perceptions of their engagement with the phenomena.

The iterative nature of IPA gave me the opportunity to follow the outline of the hermeneutic circle as shown in Figure 4.1. I perceived it to be in four parts: the basic understanding of the phenomena, the inspection and interpretation of detail on a personal level, the inspection of detail on a wider level and finally the emergence of a deeper understanding through the collection of data and stages of analysis as described in Chapter 5.

**Figure 4.1 Hermeneutic circle**



From this I was able to gain valuable insight into the meaning of the lived experience through analysis of the 'part' and the 'whole'. The use of

one to one interviews gave my participants the opportunity to communicate using their individual voices and perceptions of their lived environment; taking their unique interpretations of experiences as seen through their own eyes. Whilst their partners were physically absent from their interviews it was acknowledged that each individual exists within their partnership and therefore relationships are not reliant on presence alone (Taylor & de Vocht 2011), however IPA facilitated the opportunity for freedom of disclosure and expression whilst still recognising the respondents' representation as a member of a concurrent partnership.

From a phenomenological perspective IPA helped me to achieve a deeper understanding of the subject using a close interpretative engagement with the participants and the text (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). It is important to note at this point that the reliance on the researcher to make sense of the participant means that the interview and analysis process unfolds differently when carried out by different researchers but with the common aim of disclosing the meaning of the experience. Therefore the interpretative role of the researcher is key to IPA and for this reason differing perspectives, interests and theoretical groundings form an essential part of the data analysis. Willig (2008) refers to this double hermeneutic approach which individualises this methodology as

personal reflexivity and I include a section on my own personal interviewer reflections in Chapter 5.

#### **4.8.3 Thoughts on embodiment in IPA**

As a phenomenological researcher it is vital that that I examine the use of embodiment in my study. As Meier et al (2012) argues, it is important to consider how, through the grounding of my own thoughts and behaviours within the environment, I can potentially obtain a much richer understanding of phenomenological based data. IPA is a methodology which focuses heavily on how humans interpret their everyday lived experiences and that incorporates both the mind and the body. The French philosopher and existentialist Merleau-Ponty in his work 'Phenomenology of Perception' which was first published in 1945, describes humans as body-subjects who exhibit physical spatiality and subjectivity and through physical activity come to learn about themselves, their bodies and their minds. He believed that 'man' is characterised as an embodied consciousness and that the world is encountered as a lived experience. 'It is never our objective body that we move, but our phenomenal body, and there is no mystery in that, since our body, as the potentiality of this or that part of the world, surges towards objects to be grasped and perceives them' (Merleau-Ponty 1962, p. 106).

Through the embodied physical encounters experienced in any musical engagement my participants are able to perceive their world as a lived experience. Whilst each individual has their own picture of their world they will have a heightened awareness of their individuality through their own physical domain. Admittedly embodiment transcends just bodily functions but it is an essential component which connects the body with the mind. IPA research focusses keenly on the relationship between the body and the life-world, prioritising the body as a key element in knowing about the world (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). For this reason I feel that IPA is a sound choice for this study as I want to comprehend the thoughts, emotions and behaviours of my individual participants as they evaluate the uses of music within their relationships and in particular as a means of communication and the formation of a joint identity within their partnerships.

#### **4.8.4 Critique of IPA**

Despite being widely used in the world of health and social sciences IPA is not without its critics. Giorgi (2011) challenges the methodology claiming that it does not adhere to the universally accepted criteria of science. One of his arguments is that IPA is an intuitive and descriptive process rather than an inductive, deductive or abductive one. I would argue that the descriptive and intuitive skills of the researcher are key to

the success of IPA in that interpretations drawn from participants' texts facilitate a personal and deeper understanding of the evolving themes. Giorgi further criticises the requirements by the average individual to reflect in a phenomenological manner without training, however I argue this undermines the ability of many participants, alongside the skills of the researcher, to look further into their lived experiences and reflect more deeply.

Scientific rigor is always an issue which must be addressed in any investigation. IPA meets the required criteria through the multiple stages of interpretation which facilitate the emergence of thematic material, and the use of bracketing where the assumed preconceptions of the world are discarded when interpreting personal experiences. Yardley (2008) sets out a code of practice for qualitative research methodologies which provides a coherent inspection list that can be fully applied to IPA and this investigation. This inventory comprises: commitment to sensitivity to context through an awareness and appreciation of participants, data, current literature and an awareness of the socio-economic climate; commitment and rigor through a close link with the purpose of a study, thorough explanation of the process plus quality and depth of interview data and analysis; transparency and coherence through the clarity of findings, power of an argument; reflexivity on the part of the researcher through personal engagement with the data and the importance of

producing results which are scientifically valid and contribute to society. I have described in this chapter the philosophical underpinnings of my research method and the rationale for its use in this investigation, thereby ensuring that all aspects of Yardley's recommended qualitative methodology code of practice are addressed.

#### **4.9 Summary**

This chapter highlights the historical perspectives in qualitative research and examines the contrasts with quantitative approaches. Various qualitative methodologies are outlined followed by the philosophical background to the chosen approach, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis, thereby demonstrating its robustness with firm roots within phenomenological inquiry. This was followed by a description of the approach and its significance for this current investigation. I then focussed on embodiment and provided a critique of IPA which leads to the next chapter, describing in detail the component parts of the methodology employed in this study.

## CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH METHOD

### 5.1 Overview

This chapter deals with the research approach chosen for this investigation. Due to the aims of the research, a qualitative phenomenological approach using an individual interview design was adopted in order to gain new insights into the role of music within the relationships of couples in early retirement. This choice of methodology and design allowed each participant to recount their thoughts, emotions and opinions as an individual and simultaneously as part of a couple. The chapter begins with the aims of the study, followed by the details and rationale behind the research design process. There follows a section on recruitment criteria and selection, interview design and details of the participants. I then outline the interview process and preparation, discuss ethical considerations and provide a description of the interviews, data recording, storage and analysis of the narratives. Finally the chapter ends with a section on interviewer reflexivity and a concluding summary.

### 5.2 Study aims

The aim of this research is to explore the role of musical experiences in the wellbeing of marriages/partnerships in a group of five co-habiting heterosexual couples who are retired and in good health, seeking to offer new insights into the importance of music in a key area of health, identity

and social relationships. The work aims to access participants' in depth accounts within the following domains: personal emotional responses to music, music through the lifespan, perceived uses of music within a relationship, the role of music in the health of couple relationships, the nature of music as a communication tool and the formation of a joint identity. By examining the importance of music throughout the lifespan from childhood to the third age, and exploring the subsequent symbiosis between music and the health and wellbeing of marital relationships in retirement (as outlined in the Introduction) three key research questions are addressed:

- What does music mean to the participants, historically and currently through their life journey, and how central is musical engagement in defining who they are today as retirees?
- How do the respondents use music as a therapeutic tool and source of positivity in order to regulate agency and how does this relate to their current sense of wellbeing?
- Does music facilitate the formation of a joint identity and how does this contribute to the health of marital relationships in retirement and positive perceptions of future selves?



### 5.3 Research design

For any phenomenological research investigation to be meaningful it is essential to have a coherent link between the philosophical foundations, the aims of the study and the methods of data collection and analysis. The role of music in the lives of retired couples is the specific phenomenon for this research. The key objective is to describe the perceptions and views of participants as they engage in the lived experience of the phenomenon under investigation. I decided to adopt Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009; Willig, 2010) as my approach as it is an interpretivistic, naturalistic methodology and inductive by nature. It afforded me, as the researcher, the opportunity to collaborate with the participants through direct access to their life world and construct a meaningful representation of their reality.

Interviews, and to a lesser extent diaries, have historically been the favoured methods of collecting data in IPA as they allow access to detailed first-hand accounts by the individual participants (Willig, 2010). In this particular study, semi-structured interviews were utilised to facilitate detailed personal researcher and participant engagement with the phenomenon.

The focus of IPA is to explore the meanings that are revealed from an individual's account of an experience rather than to objectively record the experience itself. The researcher therefore gains a detailed direct account from the participant and sifts this narrative through their own life world experiences, thereby setting up an analytic researcher/participant dialogue or conversation. The significant difference between this and other forms of qualitative methodologies such as grounded theory, is the double hermeneutic process which produces the dual approach to analysis. Both methodologies are based on observations but IPA is idiographic, dealing with single individual cases in a small group, comparing them and constructing common themes within a psychological and interpretative framework, whereas grounded theory tends to deal with the identification and analysis of basic social processes (Willig, 2010).

As previously outlined in Chapter 4, IPA utilises the concept of the hermeneutic circle (Guignon, 1993) which was first developed by Heidegger in the 1920s. It facilitates the understanding of external phenomena by entering on the path of the circle and interpreting the phenomena in its entirety whilst still observing other meanings which may or not be concealed. Initially the researcher connects to the hermeneutic of meaning or empathy through the adoption of an insider

perspective, and considers the phenomena, from the viewpoint of the participant as revealed in their narrative. Secondly, connection is made to the hermeneutic of questioning or suspicion which is more interpretative in nature and involves enquiry about the meanings participants assign to their experiences. Gadamer (Laverty, 2003) furthered this philosophy by describing the circle as an iterative process reliant on conversation and intellectual communication with others. This can be observed in IPA analysis through the constant moving back and forth and continued reflection on parts and the whole of the text.

Researcher personal understanding of the phenomenon under investigation is essential as it enhances the quality of the process and increases researcher accountability. As Heidegger (1927/1962) emphasises, the researcher brings their prior experiences, thoughts and notions to a situation, and inevitably regards any new stimulus in the light of their own prior engagement. In this particular instance, as a researcher now in her fifth decade, I include my experience of friends and colleagues entering the world of retirement.

My study contextualised IPA within broader inquiry and followed the outline of the hermeneutic circle perceiving it to be in four parts: the basic understanding of the phenomena, the inspection and interpretation of

detail on a personal level, the inspection of detail on a wider level and finally the emergence of a deeper understanding. From this I was able to gain valuable insight into the meaning of the lived experience through analysis of the 'part' and the 'whole'. Through the use of interviews IPA has allowed my participants to communicate using their individual voices and perceptions of their lived environment; taking their interpretations of experiences as seen through their own eyes. From a phenomenological perspective I have sought to achieve a deeper understanding of the subject using a close interpretative engagement with the participants and the text (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). The interpretative role of the researcher as referred to in Chapter 4 through *époche* and the philosophies of Husserl and Heidegger, is key to IPA with differing perspectives, interests and theoretical groundings forming an essential part of the data analysis. Smith, Flowers and Larkin (2009), Forrester (2010) and many others refer to this double hermeneutic approach which individualises this methodology as 'personal reflexivity' and I include a section on this area later in this chapter.

Apparent limitations of this study namely small sample size and retired demographic can also appear to be its strengths. IPA actively supports the use of a small sample in order to gain rich descriptive data from individual case by case experiences (Smith & Eatough, 2006). Even

though the conclusions cannot be generalised to the wider population, utilising a group of ten retired individual participants allowed for a sophisticated and nuanced perspective of subjective thoughts and feelings on key issues. Also findings from this study are based on the chosen participant criteria of 'actively retired' and deal solely with individuals who remain mobile and in reasonably good health, thereby omitting those who have cognitive or physical impairments. Their selection was based on purposive sampling, focussing on a homogenous sample of middle class couples within a specific socio-culturally aware group where musical engagement played an important part in family life. This allowed for reflection on a body of musical experiences shared by all the participants. Leading on from this general discussion of the IPA approach I now continue with a detailed account of the various aspects of my research design beginning with recruitment criteria and selection, interview design, details of the participants, the interview process and preparation and ethical considerations.

### **5.3.1 Recruitment criteria**

A key component of this study was to recruit participants who offered a meaningful perspective on the phenomenon being studied and insights from the viewpoint of joint expertise. In keeping with this requirement, purposive criterion sampling was used, in order to ensure that my sample

was tied to my objectives and aims. I decided that the research design would incorporate three criteria in order that the relationship status of the phenomena under investigation would be constant. Participants were required to be physically active and mobile, have a keen interest in music and have been engaged in a lengthy partnership (10 years plus).

Gerontologists are now acknowledging that the emergence of a new life stage encompassing the retirement years prior to the onset of disability, labelled the 'Third Age', (Carr & Komp, 2011) can represent a new period in life, producing an era of continued growth and development. With a large number of people expecting to experience a substantial quantity of retirement years, aspirations are high to grasp the many opportunities on offer in later life. Therefore the decision to focus on people in retirement who were physically active was rooted firstly in the assumption that potentially they would be engaged in a wide field of musical activities ranging from music listening through to active participation, and secondly to theories of successful ageing. The latter were explored earlier in section 2.3, for example through Positive Psychology (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) wherein happiness levels increased with engagement in positive music thereby enhancing feelings of wellbeing (Ferguson & Sheldon, 2013), and in section 3.4, in which the participants'

salutogenic perspective on life (Naaldenberg et al, 2012) resulted in the self- construction of a meaningful lifestyle through musical experiences.

This study had an implicit hypothesis that music leads to healthy ageing and therefore for the second criteria it was essential that the couples exhibited a keen interest in musical engagement in order to offer detailed insight into the phenomenon under investigation. Only one of the participants had been a professional musician and had worked as a school music teacher, the rest either practised music on an amateur basis or participated in music listening both in and out of the home environment. Given the heterogeneous nature of musical genres and the inductive approach of this study no focus was placed on specific types of music and therefore the participants were free from any genre focussed constraints.

Thirdly I decided to focus on couples who had known each other for some considerable time. Spouses have an investment in marriage as a shared venture demonstrating an identifiable natural joint maturation process. I felt that a period of ten years or more was a suitable time for an identifiable pattern of growing together to be evident with a reduced risk of separation. Whilst there is no substantive evidence related to this as a specifically key period of time, data from the Office for National Statistics indicates that once a marriage survives for a decade under 31% would

end in divorce, with the percentage of divorces decreasing to 15% at the twenty year mark (Divorces in England and Wales, 2011).

### **5.3.2 Recruitment selection**

IPA is data driven and benefits from a small sample size in order to gain substantially rich reflective and detailed narratives. Although there is no specified ideal sample size the focus is on quality rather than quantity (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I chose to interview ten individuals (n = five men and five women) which is at the upper end of most comparable IPA studies (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005) as I felt a larger sample would inhibit the depth of analysis.

It was decided that the investigation would centre on a purposively sampled homogenous group of five middle class couples. According to results from the Arts Audience Report (Arts Council 2011), high engagement in the arts is strongly supported by this well-educated socio-economic demographic group, making them aptly suited to this study. Contact was made by emailing friends and colleagues from my personal email address list asking for recommendations of couples who fulfilled the criteria as stated in section 5.3.1 above. I felt that it was important that they were largely unknown to me as I didn't want to enter the interviews



with any preconceptions; I was of the opinion that 'tabla rasa' was preferable, with no preformed impressions.

As a result of this preliminary enquiry a list of potential participants emerged and I was able to select couples who matched all aspects of the criteria by studying the information given to me about the couples from my email contacts. From a purely practical point of view I decided to base my interviews in two locations, Glasgow and Sheffield. I obtained postal and email addresses for five couples and approached them by written letter or email (see Appendices 1 and 2) enclosing information sheets about the purpose of the study and consent forms requiring their signatures see Appendices 3 and 4). Four couples responded very rapidly and positively, however a fifth declined due to family issues. As my initial approach had amassed a large number of potential participants the process of finding another couple who were willing to take part proved to be straightforward. Two of the couples were based in Sheffield and the remaining three lived within a twenty mile radius of Glasgow.

Participants were then contacted by email to set up interview appointments along with an attachment outlining the main topic areas to be covered: what music means to the participants, their emotional response to music, participation in musical activities alone and as a

couple, the role of music in the health and wellbeing of their marital relationship, thoughts on retirement and ageing and the use of music through the ageing process (see Appendix 5).

### **5.3.3 Interview design**

An increasing body of qualitative research is emerging which advocates the potential advantages of dyadic interviewing (Eisikovits & Koren, 2010; Morris, 2001). For this study a decision had to be made whether to interview the participants individually or as couples. After reflection I decided that the individual approach would be preferable to dyadic interviewing. Whilst both methods have strengths and limitations I was keen to enter the life world of each individual and encourage personal accounts and reflections without the possibility of influence from the presence of a partner and therefore potential demand characteristics. In individual interviewing the researcher and the participant enter into a dyadic conversation which is wholly idiographic in nature: when a participant's partner is included the focus changes and the relationship itself becomes more actively couple defined and less individualistic. Further limitations of the dyadic approach for this investigation included the possible presence of conflict and differences, the likelihood that criticisms were less likely to be stated, ethically the participants may prefer to be interviewed separately and finally participants may form a

consensual and sympathetic response rather than an individual one. The focus on drawing out the individual versions of the phenomenon under investigation within the relationship was of paramount importance and therefore the individual approach was essential in order to observe these different world views. My choice of conducting one to one interviews led to the choice of an analytical method which would enable me to compare and match individual accounts, seeking themes of commonality between each of the participants (see section 5.6).

#### **5.3.4 The participants**

In order to achieve anonymity within transcription the participants were given pseudonyms, as were any members of their families and friends who were mentioned in the interviews. Additional information which was found in the data was also screened to ensure complete confidentiality. This was particularly important in the case of the two couples from Sheffield who interacted socially with each other; the other three couples from Glasgow lived in different areas and were unknown to each other. All were happy to be interviewed and received no compensation or remuneration. The following table (Figure 5.1) shows an outline of the participants' details.

Figure 5.1 Participant details

Participant name	Age	Number of years retired from main employment	Brief description of main career history (including any current part-time paid/voluntary work)	Number of years you have known your partner	Number of years you and your partner have been married
Eileen	65	3	Retired junior school teacher	40	37
Ewan	65	3	Retired HR consultant	40	37
Sylvia	65	5	Retired music teacher	35	30
Neil	65	3	Retired business consultant	35	30
Lucy	67	7	Retired administrator	25	20
Graham	62	2	Retired business consultant	25	20
Sally	62	8	Retired legal secretary. Currently church secretary	15	8
Nick	70	11	Retired teacher	15	8
Jean	64	15	Retired primary school assistant head teacher. Currently on Valuation Appeal Panel	28	25
John	79	14	Retired chartered accountant and chairman of local community centre	28	25

### 5.3.5 The interview process

Most IPA studies utilise the semi structured interview as it allows the researcher to engage in a rapport with the participant and grants the latter the opportunity to speak openly and reflectively. Unlike other qualitative data collection designs it facilitates full freedom of speech for

the participant centred around a loose structure of pre formed questions. The ambiance of the interview and empathetic atmosphere can be controlled by the researcher and all non-verbal cues are easily visible.

Qualitative research lends itself to various forms of data collection which enable the participants to recount their detailed stories to the researcher, these include face to face interviews, telephone and electronic/email interviewing, focus groups, postal questionnaires and diaries, As the aim of IPA is to focus on individual experiences and to understand certain phenomena in particular situations, it is essential to choose a data collection method which most effectively facilitates the retrieval of highly detailed information. The following table (Figure 5.2) details the most common forms in use along with a review of each approach.

**Figure 5.2 Data collection methods**

	Data collection approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
Interviews	Structured interview	Fixed questions/easy to analyse Effective and efficient All participants treated the same Language inflections and bodily movements can be observed	Limited response Difficult to obtain reliable data on opinions and attitudes Fixed questions may mean interesting lines of enquiry may have to be overlooked Less researcher interviewing skills
	Semi-structured interview	Flexible - interviewer can adapt questions to follow participants' lead/more detailed data/inductive Respondents more likely to discuss sensitive issues Language inflections/bodily movements observed/ greater empathy between participant and researcher	Time consuming and more difficult to compare with other interviews Interviewer skills required when addressing sensitive issues

	Data collection approach	Advantages	Disadvantages
(Interviews Continued)	Unstructured interview	Flexible/inductive Respondents more likely to discuss sensitive issues Language inflections and bodily movements can be observed	Time consuming and very difficult to compare with other interviews Interviewer skills required when addressing sensitive issues
	Email interview	Wide geographical access Potentially more confessional due to anonymity Low cost Informed consent required to ensure confidentiality	Less personal Lack of social cues
	Telephone interview	Wide geographical access Cost effective Easy to disclose information Confidentiality can be observed	Lack of social cues Less possibility to create a good interview ambiance
	Focus groups	Quick and convenient High ecological validity Larger sample Useful for exploring participants' knowledge base and experience	Presence of others may result in conformity Difficult to arrange availability of all participants at the same time Less personal Sensitive issues may be compromised
Written	Postal questionnaires	Cost effective Participants may be more truthful than in a face to face interview	Low flexibility as no possibility of pursuing unexpected data Poor response return rate Participants may be affected by social desirability
	Diaries	Participants can fill these in retrospectively Can be used for additional information Useful if participants struggle to address sensitive issues verbally	Lack of researcher control Social cues unavailable

I chose to collect data for the study through face to face interviews. It was important that a positive relationship existed between me as the researcher and the participants in order to encourage disclosure of personal life events, thoughts and emotions. For this reason I felt that

interviewing directly in person was the preferred method. Semi-structured and open ended questions were utilised in order to gain insight into the participants' involvement with music. I was interested in obtaining information about their lived experiences and the meanings they constructed from these experiences. As shown in the 'Advantages' column of 'Semi-structured interviews' in Figure 5.2, all language inflections and bodily cues can be observed first-hand using this method of data collection.

The questions I used primarily focussed around the following key topic areas: the meaning of and emotional responses to music, music through the lifespan, retirement, ageing, musical involvement in retirement, listening and participating in musical activities as a couple and the role of music in the health of relationships (see Appendix 5). Within these areas participants were able to freely explore their views, experiences and any sensitive issues at their own speed. Questions which required deeper engagement were allocated a more open-ended approach as I was keen to ensure that no data was left uncovered which would be of key relevance to the enquiry.

### 5.3.6 Interview preparation

Before embarking on the process of interviewing sample participants, a pilot interview was conducted with someone known to the researcher. She was a 76 year old, recently widowed lady who had experienced considerable musical engagement during her marriage with her late husband. She was very keen to be interviewed and talk about the importance of music within this partnership. The interview lasted about an hour and took place informally in the participant's home. It was not recorded or transcribed, but it allowed me to have the opportunity to hone my interview technique and identify areas which required improvement or alteration.

I met with a supervisor who piloted my technique through one to one interview practice sessions. I was also given reflexive exercises to critique my own skills through co-analysing chunks of narrative and thereby expanding my analytic repertoire. Additionally I attended various IPA workshops where there were opportunities to practice IPA interviewing techniques. Initial problems of closed questions and multiple interviewer questions were addressed.



### 5.3.7 Ethical Considerations

As in all research with human subjects it is necessary to clarify the conditions under which psychological research is acceptable. Compliance was made with the University's regulations as outlined by the Research Ethics committee and a detailed proposal of the research investigation was submitted for approval prior to data collection. Ethical issues of importance in this study are: confidentiality of research information, consent and willingness to participate, the right of participants to withdraw at any time, anonymity of the couples and the responsibility of the investigator to protect participants from mental harm (stress) during the investigation.

Participants were issued with written information about the nature of the research and consent forms which were completed and returned. It was crucial that the participants felt they could put their trust in me as the interviewer and that any sensitive information would not be disclosed. As the study dealt with the lived experience of music in the participants' lives and partnerships there was a potential risk that they would experience periods of emotion in recalling past events. I took ethical responsibility for this and was aware at all times that their dignity and privacy would be maintained and safeguarded. They were met in the comfort of their own homes and briefed orally prior to the commencement

of the interview. Participants were made aware that the research may not be of benefit to them but that full confidentiality would be maintained at all times. They were assured of complete anonymity, their right to withdraw and that they did not have to answer questions during interviews.

The University Ethics Committee processes were therefore fully observed and complete approval was attained.

### **5.3.8 Interview setting**

The interviews took place in participants' houses and were participatory, with the aim of making them feel less pressurised and achieving a closer rapport which would lead to more informed data (Fontana & Frey, 1994). The location of an interview is highly important as participants need to feel relaxed, safe and comfortable, preferably in familiar surroundings (Smith & Osborn, 2009). For this reason I travelled to Sheffield and Glasgow to conduct the interviews in the couples' homes. I was keen to ensure full privacy which is vital to a qualitative interview within an environment that is quiet and free from any interruptions (King & Horrocks, 2010).

## 5.4 The interview process

Before commencing each interview I gave my participants an overview of the interview process, stressing that there were no right or wrong answers, that full confidentiality would be observed, the focus of the dialogue would be on them and that they were not to feel pressurised to answer any questions if they felt uncomfortable. My objective was to keep the interviews relaxed and to create a feeling of warmth and generate trust in myself as the interviewer. The following table (Figure 5.3) outlines the key points which were essential to the interview process.

**Figure 5.3 Key points**

Main objectives
Use an opening question to facilitate a descriptive episode - Example: What does music mean to you?
Prepare secondary questions covering essential topic areas - Example: What is it about singing that is clearly so special to you?
Avoid closed questions - Example: Can you explain to me how you have used music since you retired?
Keep researcher input to the minimum
Be prepared to further investigate emerging material from each individual - Example: How do you view the ageing process?
Focus on the meaning of participants' information and guide them to make sense of their experiences through more analytical questions - Example: Tell me more about how music has cleansed you

Before each interview I engaged in an informal conversation with the participants, usually over a cup of tea, in order to create a congenial atmosphere and afford them the opportunity to express any concerns or ask me questions prior to the interview. I felt this encouraged them to feel more able and willing to talk about themselves and allowed them the opportunity to ask questions about the research and the part they were playing. The figure below (Figure 5.4) is an example of part of a general initial dialogue I had with Neil whilst I was setting up the recording equipment: he was keen to find out some more about me and how I recruited my participants.

**Figure 5.4 Initial dialogue example**

<p><b>Neil:</b> Are you relatively local Jill?</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Yes I'm in [name of village] so yes, very local</p> <p><b>Neil:</b> That's very convenient</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Yes very convenient. I'm just eh.....just outside the village and I've been here for about 20 years ---</p> <p><b>Neil:</b> ---oh really?.....and is it mostly through personal contact?---</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> Yes, they've all been through personal contact, I just emailed my friends.....and I didn't want to interview people that I particularly know....I didn't want people that I know very well---</p> <p><b>Neil:</b> Indeed--</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> ---So Sarah (pseudonym) was somebody that I emailed---</p> <p><b>Neil:</b> Ah yes---</p> <p><b>Interviewer:</b> --- and she suggested you (<i>laughs</i>)</p> <p><b>Neil:</b> Ah (<i>laughs</i>)--</p>
---

I chose to use a semi-structured technique in which open-ended questions allowed each participant to give an account in their own terms. This method is flexible and dynamic, affording the opportunity for the participant to be engaged in the flow of the dialogue. One key aspect of IPA interviewing is the question of epoché or bracketing and I focus on this in more detail in sections 4.5.1 and 4.5.2 of the previous chapter. I was aware that, although it may have appeared contradictory, I had to partially bracket my pre-understandings of the phenomenon under investigation and allow the question order to be determined by the direction of conversation with each interviewee. At this point the role of epoché was linked to the analytic procedure as opposed to being part of the data analysis (see section 5.6). It was essential that I recognised bracketing as a reflexive process which would be utilised to gain insight into the participants' narratives. This would ensure that my perception of the phenomenon under investigation would not be impeded and that I would be taking a non-judgmental stance. I began each interview by asking 'What does music mean to you?' in order to promote an initial descriptive narrative. Additionally I had prepared a series of interview topic areas which I was keen to cover in order to identify and evaluate any key points which may arise as shown in Figure 5.5.

**Figure 5.5 Topic areas**

Emotional responses to music / what music means to you
Retirement
Ageing
Music and retirement
Listening/participating in musical activities individually and as a couple
Role of music in the health of relationships

Due to the broad nature of this initial inquiry which was deliberately intended to be unspecific in order to facilitate freedom of response, a variety of answers were forthcoming with differing emphases. I therefore had to tailor further prompts in order to explore the phenomena further and keep the interviews on track: this could be seen as a form of ‘agenda setting’ as I was keen to make sure that I retained some control over the important aspects of the subject under investigation. A demonstration of this can be observed in the two contrasting examples of the response to my initial question as shown at the start of this paragraph. It can be seen that Jean focuses on early memories and begins a chronological account of her encounters with music; this approach was taken by several other participants. In order to gain more in depth information I drew out some key words that she used and asked her to reflect on these as in the ‘funnelling’ technique described later in this section (see paragraph following Figure 5.8).

### Figure 5.6 Key words

**Interviewer:** What does music mean to you?

**Jean:** Music has been part of my life from when I was three or four years old I suppose....um.....I....when I was really young my Grandma had a piano and she would play piano and she was the first one, because I was so keen to play this piano, she was the first one to help me do it, just as a little girl would, and ...the other thing was and when I was that age as well, my father's older brother my uncle, uh..he didn't read music but he used to play ragtime and I was mesmerised as a child, watching and listening to this so I suppose that was my introduction to music... *(narrative continues at length chronologically)*

**Interviewer:** You mentioned a couple of key words there which I've picked up on that I'd like you to tell me more about. You said early on you were mesmerised ..... Can you perhaps explain a little bit more about these kinds of feelings?

Conversely Lucy's response was quite different and she immediately expressed the meaning of music in her life from an emotional point of view in one succinct sentence and awaited my reaction. From these few powerful words I focussed on presenting a simple exploratory question to direct her towards more meaningful and detailed sense meaning.

### Figure 5.7 Exploratory question

**Interviewer:** What does music mean to you?

**Lucy:** ...soul food. It's essential to my existence and I need it just to keep my .....soul.....nurtured and nourished

**Interviewer:** Tell me how it nourishes your soul?

I used this method of continued interaction with the participants and I was constantly aware of the need to be sensitive to their responses

bearing in mind the ethical principles outlined in section 5.3.7. Two of the women became emotional at the recollection of painful events in their lives and I was keen to empathise with them in a suitable way, giving them a moment to reflect and relax before asking if they were ready and willing to move on with the interview.

**Figure: 5.8 Reflection**

**Jean:** I would put on Classic FM and that's where I would leave my dad because when he heard the music he just settled down.....the kind of dementia he had could be quite aggressive.....so all of that time I used music (*tearful...unable to carry on*)

**Interviewer:**.....(*long pause*). Would you like some water? Have some water (*water offered and accepted*)

**Jean:** Thank you.....

I decided to maintain an open approach to questions and invited participants to be more descriptive and reflective on key issues that arose. Keeping an emphasis on the phenomenon under study was crucial to the interview process and I tried to avoid making assumptions and manipulating answers. Once I had gained the respondents' general views on topic areas I employed a technique called 'funnelling' whereby I probed further for more details on specific points which had arisen. This allowed the data to be 'subject led' and helped to reduce interviewer bias as the initial information is provided by the participant.



One obstacle that I encountered at first was the participants' awareness of my standing as a professional musician and the initial desire on the part of some to give me an elaborate list of their favourite pieces of music and why they liked them. One such example is Ewan, a keen amateur musician who is heavily involved in the world of choral music as a singer and conductor. I found that I had to continually draw him back from purely listing choral pieces and re-engage him in narrative about his thoughts and interpretation of music as a lived experience. I felt eventually he was able to centre his dialogue around pieces of music that generated an emotional reaction.

**Figure 5.9 Re-engagement**

**Ewan:** In the main, it's the enjoyment of listening to it. I, I don't particularly like Grand Opera. There are some of the choruses from some of the Grand Operas you know from Medea and The Chorus of the Hebrew Slaves, or something like that, but again it's tuneful melodies (*sigh*). If I go back to Sullivan's music and the Pirates of Penzance, When The Foeman Bares His Steel, we have one tune going and then the ladies come in, with an entirely different.....tune and they just mesh together so well and I, I think 'how clever that is!' and I just enjoy singing things like that as well. In truth I enjoy conducting things like that – that too.

Sally by contrast barely mentions any prior musical knowledge and opens up her personal perceptions by assessing how music affects her mood and emotions in the different environments she encounters on a daily basis.

### Figure 5.10 Personal perceptions

**Sally:** I went to a, a ceilidh on, on Saturday evening, we were both due to go but in the end Nick\*\* couldn't because we had a visit from a family member but I actually went with Sarah\*\*\* funnily enough (laughs) And uhm, listen---listening to ehm, that kind of music really uhm.....makes me feel happy....and I want to jig about and I mean I'm not (laughs) I'm not really.....I'm probably more introvert than I am extrovert but I think music does bring something out in me that other things don't and so I suppose it makes me feel....very much alive...

I found that as the interviews progressed a natural rhythm became apparent with me as the active listener, reflecting and asking for further expansion of interesting material from the participants' stories. The average interview time lasted between sixty and ninety minutes and at the end I was careful to ask the participants if they had anything to add as they may have wished to share further insights and feelings with me that were not covered during the interview. As they had been given a list of the intended topic areas as outlined in section 5.3.2, I felt it was important for them to have the opportunity to tell me anything that they felt would be relevant to my research.

### 5.5 Data recording and storage

Recording the interviews was carried out using an Olympus MP3 Digital Stereo Voice Recorder alongside my mobile phone as a backup. Both pieces of equipment were small in size and therefore not intrusive or

obvious. In addition I placed a small digital clock on the table for my reference in order to gauge the time and keep within the reasonable limit of one to one and a half hours for the interview. I ensured that all data was safely stored in a secure environment to safeguard confidentiality. All the interviews were subsequently transcribed using a set transcription procedure.

**Figure 5.11 Transcription procedure**

“...”	denotes a pause (the length of pause is represented by the repetition of ellipses)
“---“	denotes overlapping speech
“ _____ ”	denotes a direct quote
‘ _____ ’	denotes paraphrasing
*	denotes a pseudonym

I personally transcribed three of the interviews and then took the pragmatic decision to enlist the help of an assistant to transcribe the remaining seven interviews due to time constraints. To ensure confidentiality my assistant signed an agreement promising not to share any information with anyone other than myself and acknowledging that any violation of this agreement would constitute a serious breach of ethical standards. I then checked each transcription alongside the audio recording to ensure accuracy.

## 5.6 Data Analysis

IPA analysis is directed by a set of processes which can be flexibly applied to suit the requirements of the researcher. These procedures are iterative and inductive by nature and facilitate a focus on the participants' endeavours to make sense of their experiences (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). I employed these processes as a structural framework on which to base my analysis. At this point in the handling of the data, bracketing facilitated researcher empathy with the phenomenon being analysed and was dynamically integrated into the research methodology (see section 5.4). The strategies used incorporated a line by line analysis of the data, identification of emergent themes, determining a relationship between the themes, organising a format whereby the analysis could be viewed as a flowing procedure from start to finish, personal reflexivity and finally the creation of a detailed theme by theme narrative. This procedure involves the double hermeneutic approach as previously detailed in section 5.3 with me as the researcher making sense of the participant, who in turn was making sense of the phenomenon under investigation. An example of this can be seen in the following extract from the interview with John.

**Figure 5.12 Double hermeneutic approach**

**John:** I would have loved to be a musical composer, because I've got so many ideas and so many things I would like to express with music that relate to sound.

**Interviewer:** *Empathic about his innate creativity but frustrated at not being able to translate his thoughts and ideas through the medium of musical invention. Clear feeling of regret and possible loss of agency.*

The interviews were printed in landscape and incorporated the transcript within the left hand column with four further columns to the right headed description and content, language use, interrogative and conceptual coding and finally emerging themes. This layout facilitated clarity of thought within the separate subject headings. Initially I listened to each interview aurally several times in order to revisit the interview setting and remind myself not only of the data, but of any thoughts or feelings I had held at the time. Subsequently each interview was read and reread with the objective of wholly immersing myself in the transcripts. This was a key part of the process as it allowed me to fully enter each participant's world and make initial exploratory notes constantly checking for accuracy and thereby establishing rigour (Poland, 1995). Descriptive comments on content and language usage were logged and I then strove to code these into conceptual comments which were more interpretative in nature. Figure 5.13 shows an example of the

exploratory process leading to interrogative and conceptual coding from an interview with John.

**Figure 5.13 Exploratory process**

Interview	Description & content	Language use	Interrogative & conceptual coding
<p>Interviewer: , .... you used the word ‘reassuring’ can you, could you elaborate on that a little bit about how you felt?</p> <p><b>John:</b> Mmmmh. Well I suppose em, I, the-the-the em, I think life is quite turbulent and ehm, I think you can get-you can get great piece of mind and get great reassurance from listening to something that is well played and well controlled and professionally done. It, eh, it just shows you what’s, what’s in human nature and what humans can do when they apply their mind to something of beauty, because many of these pieces of music are just absolutely outstanding and to me that’s very reassuring that man can create something beautiful. I often say to myself and I’m quite honest about this, I would have loved to be a musical composer, because I’ve got so many ideas and so many things I would like to express with music that relate to sounds. For example, you might be lying beside a brook and you hear the water trickling down over a fall or</p>	<p><i>Loss of agency?</i></p> <p><i>Meaning of music – reassuring</i></p> <p><i>Beauty of music</i></p> <p><i>Questioning career path</i> <i>Regret</i></p> <p><i>Self analysis</i> <i>Recognises his own creativity</i> <i>Pride in his work.</i></p>	<p><i>Repetition of ‘great’</i></p> <p><i>Repetition of ‘well’.</i></p> <p><i>Absolutely</i></p> <p><i>Repetition of ‘reassuring/ reassurance’</i></p> <p><i>Create - religious/ spiritual?</i></p>	<p>Life’s problems</p> <p>Appreciative of professionalism</p> <p>Analyses human behaviour</p> <p>Empathetic about his creativity but regret that his talent was wasted – some regret over career path</p> <p>Very aware of his own creativity – takes pride in this</p>

<p>something and the music together with the birds round about you and you know the noise of nature – absolutely wonderful! And that can be very---you see it brings you back down to a very reassuring, a reassuring place in life. Does that help you?</p> <p>Interviewer: You're painting pictures here, do you think that there's a link between music and how you express yourself?</p> <p>John: Very, very much so but I think that em, that basically I am an extremely creative person, I think that anyway. And I always have been, even all the way through my work I was always extremely creative and companies had problems as a management, as a chartered accountant and there's a management consultant I was able somehow or other to come out with most unusual and rewarding solutions and it was, I find it the same with art, I was able to create and imagine things very well. And it's the same, I would have loved to have applied that to music.....</p>	<p><i>Fantasy location</i></p>		Overwhelmed with ideas
	<p><i>Music provides comfort</i></p>	<p><i>Wonderful</i></p>	
	<p><i>Needs to help me – the interviewer</i></p>	<p><i>Reassuring</i></p>	Seems to need reassurance
		<p><i>'Very, very'</i></p>	
		<p><i>Repetition of 'creative'</i></p>	
	<p><i>Ability in finding solutions</i></p>	<p><i>Extremely</i></p>	Reiterates his creativity – is he frustrated in not finding a personal musical outlet for this?
	<p><i>Artistic Repetition of creative abilities</i></p>	<p><i>Somehow</i></p> <p><i>Rewarding</i></p>	Identity - professional Needs to help?
	<p><i>Regret</i></p>	<p><i>Create</i></p> <p><i>Loved</i></p>	Acknowledges creativity Regret and loss of agency again

From this coding I was able to compile a list of emergent themes (see Appendix 6 for a full and detailed example of this process). In order to facilitate clarity I compiled a graphic representation of these emergent themes for all the participants by printing them, cutting out each one and

placing them as a list on a board in alphabetical order. At this point I looked to see which themes occurred the most frequently amongst the participants and these more powerful and original themes were grouped according to similarity or resemblance, co-joined and given a more descriptive label. These larger themes are known in IPA as overarching themes. Any emergent theme which had few ‘partner’ themes and appeared to be lacking in persuasion was discarded. Three overarching themes emerged from the data namely The Journey, Salvation, and Present and Future Selves. Each of the overarching themes was then further subdivided into superordinate themes containing the retained emergent themes. In order to clarify this process an illustration (Figure 5.14) is shown to outline the thematic structure of the thesis.

**Figure 5.14 Thematic structure of the thesis**

Overarching theme 1	The Journey
<b>Superordinate theme</b> The musical relationship story	<b>Superordinate theme</b> Insecurities
<b>Emergent themes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The centrality of music</li> <li>• Memories</li> <li>• Music in the social setting</li> <li>• Music as a channel of communication</li> </ul>	<b>Emergent theme</b> Musical confidence issues and limitations



Overarching theme 2	Salvation
<b>Superordinate theme</b> Significant times	<b>Superordinate theme</b> Spirituality
<b>Emergent themes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life changing events</li> <li>• The control problem</li> <li>• Regret</li> </ul>	<b>Emergent themes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacred notes</li> <li>• Emotional perspectives</li> <li>• Vocal music</li> </ul>
Overarching theme 3	Present and Future Selves
<b>Superordinate theme</b> Nurturing a joint identity	<b>Superordinate theme</b> Into the future
<b>Emergent themes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Music and attachment</li> <li>• Shared taste</li> </ul>	<b>Emergent themes</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ageing issues</li> <li>• Future selves</li> </ul>

It was essential at this point to extract quotes from the narratives for the chosen emergent themes and these were colour co-ordinated to represent the different participants (see Appendix 7). Only quotes which were deemed to best represent the emergent themes were ultimately chosen for inclusion in the thesis. I then commenced my interpretative analysis of the data, frequently revisiting the text in order to provide a deeper meaning to the data rather than simply producing a descriptive narrative. The process was highly iterative and inductive, demanding

continued comparative analysis of similar and oppositional relationships between themes. The culmination of this entire procedure was an in depth thematic analysis which is detailed in Chapters 6 to 8 of this dissertation.

The following Figure 5.15 is a photographic illustration of the analytical procedure of an individual transcript.

**Figure 5.15 Photograph of analysed transcript**

Interview	Description & content	Language use	Interrogative & conceptual coding	Emerging themes
<p>Interviewer: Right, ok. Right, John, well if we can just start with just a really general question, if you perhaps just explain to me what music means to you. Can you perhaps sort have a think.</p> <p>John: Well music means an awful lot to me, basically because I've really been brought up on music and participated in music quite extensively particularly in the early part of my life. By that I mean for example at school I was always very interested in singing and at Hamilton Academy I joined the school choir and eventually became the principle tenor in their operas and I sang Sir Walter Raleigh for example, which is in Merry, ah no, ah, yes Sir Walter Raleigh in Merry England and that was performed in the Theatre Royal in Glasgow which is the last operatic production in the Theatre Royal before it was taken over by... I think it was when... The Scottish Opera and that was the only school production of an opera that had taken place in Glasgow by a-a high school choir up at Hamilton Academy. And when, from there shortly after that I went into the army. And</p>	<p>Importance of music through the lifespan</p> <p>When in singing context - school</p> <p>Key text - principal tenor</p> <p>Self-achievement</p> <p>Context - theatre</p> <p>First - only school production</p> <p>Choices over time in army</p>	<p>Music</p> <p>Importance</p> <p>→ - attached to history</p> <p>chronological account of musical life</p> <p>engagement</p> <p>↑</p> <p>qualifier</p> <p>↓</p> <p>marker of achievement</p>	<p>Does he regard musical practices to be the key to his engagement (with the listening?)</p> <p>Why doesn't he want to practice as <del>much</del> <sup>often</sup> as he would like about the importance of music throughout his life</p> <p>↓</p> <p>marker of deficit?</p> <p>Does his in army mean very little due to absence of music?</p>	<p>Continuity of music</p> <p>Story of John</p> <p>Creation</p> <p>Scenes</p> <p>Musical Participation</p> <p>Musical importance through lifespan</p> <p>Chronological</p> <p>Sameness</p> <p>Self-achievement</p> <p>Location</p> <p>Marker of achievement</p> <p>Language</p> <p>Musical knowledge</p> <p>Musical identity</p> <p>Markers of achievement</p>

## 5.7 Interviewer reflexivity

From a personal stance, most of my working life has been spent in the music world, both as a teacher and performer and I have consistently been passionate in my belief that music is a powerful art form which has immense therapeutic and health related properties. From my Master's degree, which investigated musical identity and healthy relationships within the family unit with particular reference to mother and teenage offspring interactions (Morgan, MacDonald & Pitts, 2014), I concluded that the listening preferences of one family group/member can influence that of another. I was therefore keen to further this research and examine the role of music within alternative specific relationship pairings in the same way as other studies in music and the social environment. Addressing the issue of music in couple relationships in retirement and investigating its significance in contributing to positivity and togetherness throughout the lifespan, seemed a highly relevant area to study given the dramatically ageing population in the UK.

According to Guillemin and Gulam (2004), reflexivity concerns the personal role of the researcher and the process of generating knowledge whilst taking into account any influencing factors. Qualitative research in the field of social psychology is infused with a measure of reflexivity and IPA as a methodology supports reflexivity on the part of the analyst.

To this degree I was aware that my own values resulting from life experiences and my environment would play a role in the analysis of the data. It was inevitable that the conclusions drawn would come from the participants but the journey to reach the end goals would be a joint effort incorporating my own biography and subjectivity.

Following Husserlian thought, epoché, or the suspension of all judgements drawn from the world, must exist during the interview and analysis period and I took this into consideration by allowing participants the freedom to develop and absorb their own personal accounts and emotions. I was however aware of Heidegger's stance that epoché in its entirety is unworkable as questioning and interpretation contain beliefs based on previous experience. Finlay (2003) supports the theory that we should try to disengage ourselves from our presuppositions and perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation but that we must repeatedly consider our interpretations to progress beyond the prejudices of our previous understandings. Maso (2003) argues that reflexivity is not only a means of truthfulness about the effect of subjectivity on qualitative research, but it can also act as vehicle for improving the quality of the research. Altheide and Johnson (1994) argue that one meaning of reflexivity is that the analyst is inseparable from the setting, context and culture he or she is trying to comprehend and interpret.

Throughout the investigation I was engaged in such reflexivity, both personal and epistemological. Personal reflexivity concerns how my personal beliefs shaped the research process and in turn how I might have been influenced by the research. Epistemological reflexivity refers to critically examining the assumptions, values and biases that I might have made in the course of the investigation and the impact they would have on my findings. In other words, being transparent about the research questions and what kind of knowledge I am endeavouring to reveal (Willig, 2010). I felt that reflexive thought would strengthen the validity of my investigation and this is explored by academics such as Stiles (1993) who suggest that reflexivity is dependent on how the change or growth in the researcher's understanding is produced by new observations or interpretations.

On a personal level, my initial quandary was how to negotiate between my own ideas about retirement and those of my participants. Whilst having officially ended my career as a school music teacher a few years ago I could not strictly claim to have retired as I moved immediately back into the world of academia to pursue my doctoral studies and tutor undergraduates. I was therefore reliant on observations of others who had entered the retirement stage and of first-hand involvement of my own parents' lived experience of the retirement phenomenon. In addition

I attended seminars at university on age related topics in order to increase my knowledge and awareness of the positive and negative aspects of entering the third age. It was therefore of critical importance that I engaged in personal reflexivity in order to fully engage with my participants in order to strengthen the transparency and integrity of my research.

I was also keenly aware of my role as a professional musician and my own experiential knowledge of the world of music. It was therefore essential that during my interactions with the participants that I was fully focussed on their narratives and able to put to one side my own preconceptions of the world in which I had specialised for many years.

I found the interviewing process to be a very intimate and emotional experience. I felt privileged that all of the participants were extremely cooperative and many were prepared to disclose, at times, reflections on highly moving events in their lives. On a few occasions three of the female interviewees were reduced to tears in recalling emotionally charged times in their lives. Whilst not intending to cause any distress I felt extremely moved to witness the intensity of their emotions and be the recipient of such deeply personal memories. Sensitively drawing out in depth information from any participant is a very rewarding but exceptionally

exhausting procedure and to this end I was careful to create a limit of two interviews per day with a gap between the interview days, in order to recollect my thoughts and re-evaluate the previous interview and make any adjustments to future conversations.

At an epistemological level, reflexivity and analysis involved my engagement with the assumptions that I made during the research process and how these affected my findings. It was therefore essential that I frequently jotted down notes in order to continually review the process. Coghland and Brannick (2005) stress the need for constant analysis of the researcher's lived experience as well as any suppositions of theory or procedure. This analysis involved the question of how my investigation could have been carried out differently and how this would have resulted in a different understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. From earlier discussions in Chapter 4 I outline the alternative forms of analysis which may have been utilised in this study, and the significance for the choice of IPA as a methodology which focusses on a particular and homogenous group of participants who share experiences of a specific phenomenon.

## 5.8 Summary

This chapter deals with the methodology chosen for this investigation and demonstrates fulfilment of the code of practice as defined by Yardley (2008) and outlined in Chapter 4 (section 4.8.4). I began by reaffirming the study aims and then focussed on a description of the complete research design process. There then followed a section on the interviews themselves, how they were recorded and stored and details of the analysis process. Finally I elaborated on my thoughts on interviewer reflexivity and the criteria for producing a trustworthy, robust qualitative thesis.



## CHAPTER 6 THE JOURNEY

### 6.1 Overview

This chapter presents the first of three overarching themes from the analysis of the interviews outlined in chapters 4 and 5. The overarching themes were identified as they contain frequently appearing material within the narratives and lend clear support to the aims of the study by capturing key aspects of the participants' lived experiences. During the coding process it became apparent that some of the emergent themes were not mutually exclusive to a specific overarching theme and there were some overlaps, however in order to provide a clear and systematic analysis they have been categorised into the most relevant of the overarching themes within this specific framework.

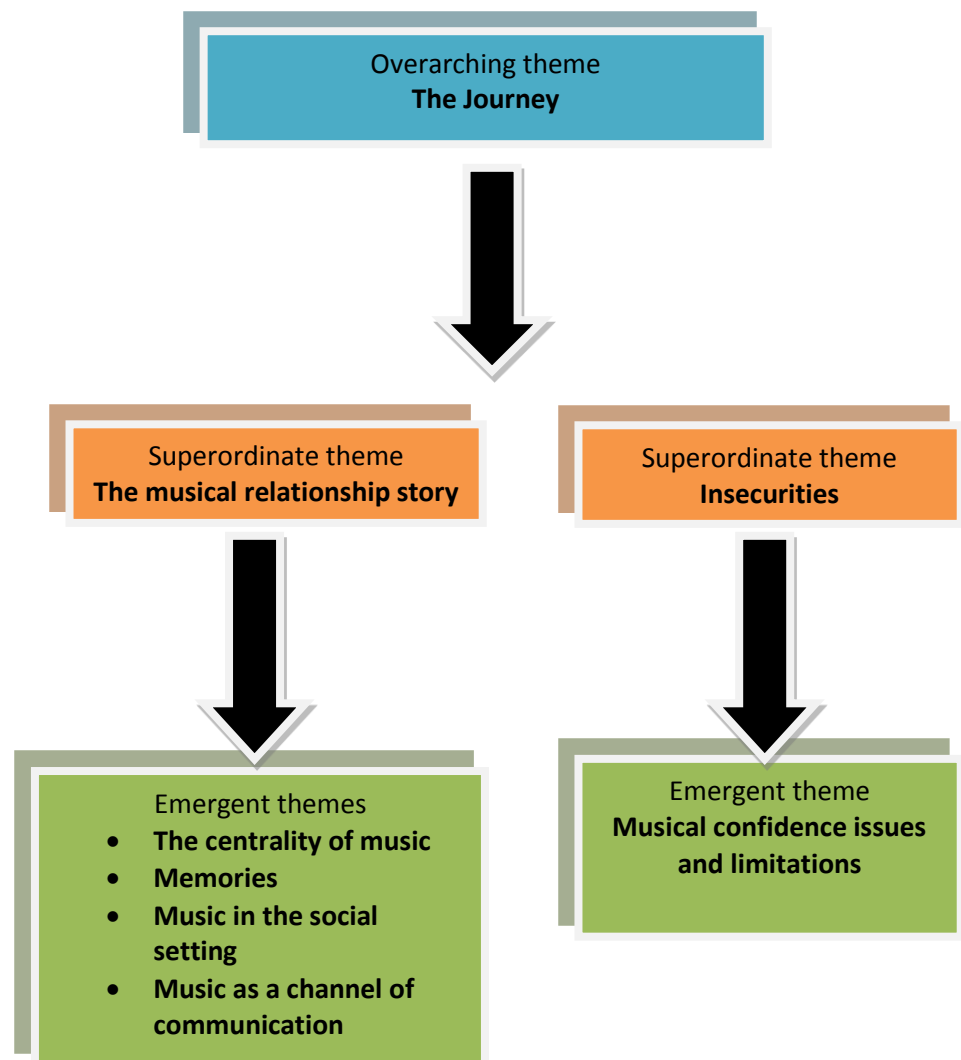
The overarching theme in this chapter, entitled 'The Journey', investigates the lifespan path of the respondents and incorporates periods of positivity and times of challenge. This chapter, 'The Journey', is specifically concerned with the importance of the role of music within the lives of the ten participants, describing their engagement in detail as an important precursor to discussing its significance in the health and wellbeing of their marital relationships in Chapter 8.

IPA analysis is a highly idiographic process with each participant projecting their own individual story; I have discussed and interpreted these personal narratives and sought commonalities where relevant. To this end the chapter is divided into two main sections which explore the importance of musical engagement through two superordinate themes. The first of these, 'The musical relationship story' identifies the extent of the participants' lifelong relationship journey with music from childhood to retirement and its associated meaningfulness in their lives. The second theme, 'Insecurities', offers a multi-layered account of the many confidence issues that emerge through participation in musical activities for the respondents with minimal or no formal music training.

The first superordinate theme is subdivided into four emergent themes: the centrality of music, memories, music in the social setting and music as a channel of communication. This investigates the temporal dimensions of human interaction with music, revealing its cruciality within lived experiences through memories of past events and shared involvement with others. A second superordinate theme deals with musical confidence issues and limitations, with some participants placing great emphasis on formal music training, suggesting that it is a necessary requirement to their perception of being musical. These themes will now be addressed in detail in order to gain an in depth awareness of the

embeddedness of musical engagement within the lifespan and lifeworld of the participants. The thematic outline of this chapter is illustrated in Figure 6.1.

**Figure 6.1 Overarching theme – The Journey**



## 6.2 The musical relationship story

This superordinate theme provides a historical story or narrative, charting the significance of the participants' interaction with music and

the impact it has on their lives from youth through to the third age. It contributes to an aim of this investigation which is to explore any construction, negotiation and maintenance of individual musical identities and that of the identity with others, particularly a spouse, across the lifespan. It also considers how this 'identity journey' impacts on the current health and wellbeing of the couple relationship within retirement which will be discussed in detail in chapter 8. Whilst the focus of this investigation is on people in retirement, the importance of a relationship with music begins from early encounters and it is at this stage that a musical identity begins to form (Trevarthen, 2002). Research by Barrett (2010) into this identity construction suggests how early engagement through narrative song inventing and music making produces a platform on which children can realise ways of developing their musical identity. The role of the infant and the carer is crucial to the formation of musical communication which is key to the identity making process. Pitts (2005) emphasises the importance of this lengthy musical interaction by suggesting that rather than viewing it as something unique it is seen as a continuous process which, in time, acquires a fixed role in people's lives. This role can be shaped and utilised to enhance personal and social development over the lifespan.

Individuals encounter many major life experiences and transitions which affect their sense of self and identity and these undergo persistent reshaping throughout life. In order to begin the exploration of the construction of these identities the opening question for each participant interview, 'What does music mean to you?' aimed at eliciting an initial and immediate reaction of the strength of their engagement and personal identity with music. Responses were divided into two approaches, one of an autobiographical narrative and the other of a succinct definition of the level of its importance within their lives. Answers ranged from 'it actually means a lot to me' and 'my initial thought was what it would be like without music in the world', through to 'if I say not a lot....don't take that the wrong way'. From this initial question it became apparent (as shown in Figure 6.2) that for eight of the participants music was a key component in life and for the remaining two it was a less important activity that they had come to appreciate to varying degrees through their partners as the result of a second marriage.

The following figure shows the initial responses from the ten participants. These similarities and differences are evidence of the fluctuations in the importance of the relationship with music between the participants as discussed in the next section.

**Figure 6.2 Participant initial responses**

Participant	Response category	Comment
<b>Eileen</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Well I was thinking about that umm...and my initial thought was what it would be like without music in the world you know and around and that would would take away quite a bit of uh.....the sort of I wouldn't say life but sort of part of living if there wasn't music about because I I enjoy music...</i>
<b>Ewan</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Ehm, in some ways I find, I find that was quite a difficult question to get my head around. Ehm.....I think it means.....it actually means a lot to me.</i>
<b>Sylvia</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>--right....well, mmmhmm. Well music became my career because I decided early on I wanted to teach music, so I went to the academy and I did the MusEd course.</i>
<b>Neil</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Right.....it means a lot to me, because it's been a significant part of my life.</i>
<b>Lucy</b>	Definition/strong musical identity	<i>...soul food. It's essential to my existence and I need it just to keep my...soul...nurtured and nourished.</i>
<b>Graham</b>	Historical narrative/weaker musical identity (in a support role)	<i>If I say not a lot ehm.....don't take that the wrong way. It's not something I'm wildly passionate about...there are things I like and things I don't like.</i>
<b>Sally</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Well I think music means quite a lot to me and it always has done actually from a young child</i>
<b>Nick</b>	Historical narrative/weaker musical identity (in a support role)	<i>Uhm.....something to relax by I suppose. Uhm I don't sing, I don't play an instrument, well I do sing when I go to church, but not like Sally I don't sing in a choir or anything like that. Uhm....so it's something that I enjoy listening to I guess, uhm....although I don't listen as much as in theory as I might.</i>
<b>Jean</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Music has been part of my life from when I was three or four years old</i>
<b>John</b>	Historical narrative/strong musical identity	<i>Well music means an awful lot to me. Basically because I've really been brought up in music and participated in music quite extensively particularly in the early part of my life.</i>

For ease of reference the participants are listed as couples as previously shown in Figure 5.1 of Chapter 5, however analytically they are considered individually in order to gain their own personal perspective on the phenomena under consideration (see section 4.8.2).

### 6.2.1 Centrality of music

This section focusses in particular on their interpretations of how key music is within their daily lives and historically. I begin by addressing the eight participants who have engaged with music from a young age and see music as an inseparable part of their lives, before considering the role music plays in the lives of the remaining two respondents whose engagement with music is less substantial.

Lucy describes her relationship with music as an all-encompassing necessity in life as demonstrated in these two quotes.

*Lucy: ...soul food. It's essential to my existence and I need it just to keep my...soul...nurtured and nourished.*

*Lucy: I can't leave it alone, I can't do without.....*

Lucy's reflection on her need for music likens it to an ingredient in a recipe for life. She appears to regard her body and soul as separate entities and has a heightened awareness of the requirements for the latter in order to keep it healthy and supported. The idiom 'can't leave it alone' implies an almost addictive quality and therefore loss of agency,

where she is happily trapped in a relationship with music which she cannot, and does not want to avoid. This is a highly personal experience which she acts out in her daily life through engagement in musical activities. Further references to Lucy's total absorption in music continue to highlight how critical music is to the wellbeing of her soul. This is especially noticeable after attending operatic productions which is one of her favoured genres.

*Lucy: I can get absolutely utterly absorbed in ehm...opera...both visually and aurally...uhm...ok the...the story is often...thinner than one would...could possibly believe but...just...to be in that music...and the expertise of the voices I just think is...very nourishing.*

In line with this John also expresses his need for music as a nurturer when describing the effect it has on his life.

*John: What does music do? I used the word 'uplifting.' Music, it purifies you. If you're listening to a top class performance by really good professional people, it purifies you! It cleanses you...*

John's narrative underscores a significant point, namely his use of music to attain purification and cleansing. There is a perception that music has restorative and health-giving properties that facilitate a balance in life. John further expresses this cleansing by referring to music as a provider of equilibrium.

*John: ...the turbulence that you get in your daily life...is in fact your....ehm.....having a turbulent time and you get this lovely calmness of music and inspiration for music that brings you back to normality.*



Music is seen here as a strong tool in the maintenance of a healthy relationship between the self in bodily form and the self as a soul. This spiritual element is discussed in more detail in Chapter 7.

Keeping music as a focal point in life seems to assist the participants through life's journey and is characterised as a friend with whom there is an indelible bond. The apparent anthropomorphisation of music suggests this exists as a valid and robust relationship. The role of music and its uses as a positive experience in society are extensive; however the personification of music as a life friend is an important finding in this study. In considering the vigour of this connection, Sally states that a world devoid of music would not be a 'nice' place and John further reflects on the priority given to music in his life by humorously suggesting that if he was put on a desert island without music he 'would drown himself!' Whilst John is clearly articulating in jest, his comment implies that life would be unbearable without music at his side as a soul-mate. John's statement draws parallels with the narratives of other participants who describe music as a positive and necessary life component and companion. Neil gives further insight to this concept in providing an interesting perception of his relationship with music.

*Neil: I'll almost always have to have music on eh it's, it's, it's a general accompaniment to me in, in life as it were.*

The co-presence of music in Neil's life suggests, like John, that he views it as a friend or companion who is constantly there and available when required. He describes how he almost always needs to have music on whether in the car or the house as it has always been a factor in his life since childhood. His interaction with music over the lifespan is very personal to him and demonstrates an intense meaningful reality. As a keen amateur conductor and choral singer, Ewan too speaks subjectively about his life, highlighting the constancy of music and his inability to mentally construct a world in which music has no influence.

*Ewan: ...it's been around.....it's difficult to say...it's been around all the time and I can't think of a time really when I...music hasn't had some form of influence on my life.*

This phenomenon of music as a companion is at the very core of existence to these three men. Their internal narrative progression demonstrates a history of intense familiarity with music which they can enjoy and turn to for support. Analyses relating to emotional responses to music, the therapeutic use of music and its role in times of challenge are detailed in Chapter 7.

Strong musical family backgrounds with early musical training and encouragement would suggest the ease with which some of the participants seek out and absorb music in their everyday lives. Negotiating a musical identity is strongly influenced by a historical

relationship with music and family influence as a child. Sylvia describes music as something which 'has always been there' due to the fact that her father and uncle were both musicians. She was encouraged to learn the piano from an early age and therefore has a strong bond with music which in fact led her to train as a music teacher. Her husband Neil, interprets his long term involvement with music as a process of direct engagement and states that this is something he needs to feel. His narrative reveals a background heavily immersed in amateur musical activity with memories of keen support for his violin playing and singing from around the age of 7 years. Having a 'fanatical' amateur horn player for a brother and two sisters who sang and played the viola respectively meant that music was always in evidence within the family home. This suggestion of family role models who provide a template for future musical activities is in line with results from existing research in this field (Davidson et al, 1996: Pitts, 2012).

It is clear however that musical training is not necessarily the key element for all participants to creating a bond with music. Eileen is keen to point out that even though her parents had no formal music education they were a source of encouragement in taking her at a young age to small local shows where she was urged to stand on the stage and sing. The joy of singing has remained with her to this day and her narrative contains

many accounts of her membership of various choral groups. In this comment she describes early memories of her mother's singing.

*Eileen: ...my mum used to sing you know when you go to...you know in the bath or go to bed and things like that um.....she wasn't a great singer...um...but it's always been something sort of just that's been.. that was in me....to sing....um....and I felt very happy when I was singing....you know I'd just sit on the fence and sing you know and things like that...it does make, it does lift you doesn't it?...well it does me...I suppose from being being small sort of singing was another.....way of showing I'm I'm happy I suppose.*

In this quotation Eileen categorises her mother as an amateur singer, but she seems to identify with this herself using the term 'in me' to demonstrate how she internalises music. She appears to view music as an extension to herself and regard singing as a natural part of the lived experience (music and the voice is further examined in Chapter 7). Perhaps this early introduction to the joy of music through maternal bedtime songs in childhood laid the foundations for Eileen's musical journey and the natural way in which she continues to feel a strong bond with music.

The significance of living in an environment where there is family input and encouragement extends beyond childhood with the centrality of music continuing to be at the core of individual existence for some of the respondents. Eight of the participants reflect on their musical journey from childhood through to retirement and emphasise its importance, with particular relevance to loved ones in adulthood.

*Interviewer: ...how important do you think music is for you and John in the strength of your partnership?*

*Jean: Very important....I really do, I really do...I think it I think it was probably one of the things right at the very beginning as I said before um...that we both....uh realised that we had in common and it has probably just grown, things kind of, just kind of snowball in a relationship ...and I think that's I I wouldn't like I really wouldn't like to be without music in our lives I really wouldn't , it would, it would, it really would be quite strange as I said to you before over all of the years that we've been together ...eh we've had such fun out of music and we've had you know fun, enjoyment, um.. happiness...I think that's and that can only help to make a relationship stronger.*

This extract shows that in her musical journey Jean sees her husband as a companion, someone who is highly influential in strengthening her bond with music. This complex interplay of musical relations suggests that music plays a fundamental role in the lives of Jean and John and is central to their partnership. The use of the metaphor 'just kind of snowball' implies an increasing intensity in the relationship which has gathered momentum as time passes. Jean perceives this to be the facilitator of a happiness factor in her marriage. In a similar way, after a lengthy narrative describing leisure pursuits enjoyed by himself and his wife, Neil retrospectively summarises his thoughts on the prominence of music in their lives. His own theory which he shares in his account is that whilst all other activities are pleasurable they can only be experienced at 'surface level' and he cannot view them profoundly. Neil appears to need interaction on a deeper level and describes music as being at the core or 'heart' of his life and marital journey.

*Neil: I suppose what I'd say is what separates out music ehm.....if you take it over the kind of totality of that relationship or say that a certain music is that.....ehm.....it is.....it is at the.....it's at the centre, well it's, it's much more at the centre....I would say ehm.....it is.....it's something that's always there ehm.....it's something that ehm it, it, it's core.....*

Analysis which focuses upon the complexities of couple development and interaction with music is presented in detail in Chapter 8.

For some, the musical identity journey has experienced periods of inactivity along the way due to unforeseen life events, but for all of these participants the necessity to engage with music proves to be a powerful factor. Jean demonstrates this through a particularly challenging time in her life.

*Jean: I had missed my music for a number of years and I hadn't realised at the time, I mean I was busy I was working, R. was small um.. my mother had died, all these things seemed to happen at the one time and.....sigh.....there was never really an opportunity for me to....do what I wanted to do to um be what I wanted to be and then when I was on my own I suddenly realised that I'd missed music so much .....and....I mean I remember as I said buying the piano ah which cost me an awful lot of money ..laugh.. out of what I had but that's what I wanted I wanted my piano I wanted to get back to that um must have been something in my heart I suppose that makes you want to do something like that and then .....I I expanded my record collection uh so that I could listen to to lots of eh different types of music and pieces of music um.....I think I think that's that's just I had I had I knew I had to get back to playing again I know I had to get back to.....being in a happier place and I think that's what music did it took me to a higher, a a a happier level.*

This concept of turning away from music helps us to understand Jean's experience of emotional upheaval and her return to a better state. The

impact of a marital breakdown, bereavement and raising a young child is a very powerful phenomenon and for a time she abandoned music as a friend and support. During this period she also experienced the loss of herself and her frustration at the lack of opportunity to consider her own needs. Movingly she describes how she came to see the void in her life which could only be filled by returning to music which had previously been at the centre of her world. She describes buying a piano, despite the financial implications, and extending her collection of records in order to allow music back into her existence. Rather than feeling alienated from music she celebrates its reappearance and enjoys the benefits that it brings. In this context, Jean wanted to return to her original path through life and continue her journey on a happier and more familiar route.

Having considered the centrality of music in the lives of those who have experienced a strong musical bond from an early age I now reflect on the two male respondents who have a more nebulous musical history and identity. For Graham and Nick the phenomenon of musical engagement is part of their existence but clearly not perceived to be central. Whilst their narratives differ significantly they both journey through life experiencing music, but their bond with it is fragmented. I describe music here as an 'it' and therefore suggest, from an ontologically idealistic viewpoint, that its reality is something constructed in the minds of the participants. In the

following extract Nick describes the level of importance given to music in his life.

*Nick: So I wouldn't say it's the vital ingredient of my life, which I have to listen to permanently, but I do enjoy it when I make the effort to listen to it. Whether---but I would say I tend to listen to more classical stuff than pop or jazz, although I quite like jazz. But ehm.....pop was the thing of my youth, but I don't think--- although if I had to listen to it, it might be alright.*

At various points in his interview Nick refers to minor occasions in his youth when he engaged with music but his emphasis seems to be on a rejection he experienced for entry to the senior school choir as a schoolboy. The impact of this type of experience will be discussed in section 6.3, however such a negative decision may have had some bearing on his willingness to engage fully with music. He suggests that maybe it affected him more than he thought at the time as right through his secondary schooling he didn't sing due to a feeling of inadequacy. Both Nick and Graham are second-timers in marriage but have longstanding relationships with their music-loving wives and it appears to be through these partnerships that they currently experience and are content to listen to music. They are aware of this intra-relationship connection and appear keen to develop a joint musical identity in order to support their wives. In the dialogues below the two men express their thoughts on interaction with their wives' musical activities.

*Nick: ...so music that we tend to share is.....her choral music basically. I go to nearly all of her concerts uhm to listen to them, also because I sort of help front of house, I volunteer to do that, or when she sings at things she does at church whether its every*



*Sunday, just listen to her there or when she's organised concerts and tea concerts with Sarah\*\* and Michael\*\*\* and one of the things she does is---within that---is that she will sing.....*

*Graham:.....ehm I suppose it's.....sometimes it's because I want to hear the, hear the musical event.....and other times it's because.....I want to keep Lucy\*\* company, or I think, I think she needs the company.*

In both of these cases there is a distinct pattern of enhancing a relationship through music by lending support. In this way the men's journey through the lifespan currently places music in a central position but not primarily for the music itself but as a means of encouragement and assistance to their spouse. They are fully empowered to take their own path but choose to co-identify with an activity which is of central importance to their wives. This suggests that their bond with music is currently relatively weak but as the retirement years unfold it may experience a strengthening. This is discussed in more detail in section 8.2.1.

To summarise this section, the meaningfulness of music as a core part in the lives of the participants is highly personal. From the quotations shown here three of the couples have experienced a musical journey through the lifespan and this has led to continued participation and enjoyment in retirement. Music acts as 'soul food' for Lucy and John and they are heavily focussed on its properties as a cleanser and purifier. Consequently it is regarded as essential and something which cannot be

overlooked. This feeling of music as a necessity is experienced by many of the respondents and is personified as a friend or confidant along life's journey, forever present to support and nourish when required. Family musical background and encouragement seem to play an important part in constructing a lifelong relationship with music with parents and siblings providing role models especially in the early years. For three of the couples their bond with music is robust and there is clear evidence of a strong musical union within the marriages. The musical dynamics differ for the remaining two couples where music is central to the lives of the wives but not to their husbands. However music is seen as having a positive role in their partnerships through the active support of the men.

### **6.2.2 Memories**

The previous section highlighted how the participants view the relevance of music throughout their lifespan. This next emergent theme discusses the impact of memories on their musical journey through reminiscences and nostalgia. Reminiscences are recollections or memories of past times which affect the present and are temporal in nature. Nostalgic experiences on the other hand tend to represent memories of a past which is irretrievably lost and remains flawlessly unaltered (Lasch, 1991). In essence they are linked to an idealised past where all negatives are removed leaving the memory of a positive emotional state (Hirsch, 1992).

Nostalgia can also be autobiographically meaningful and positively associated with reinforcing a sense of meaning in life (Routledge et al, 2011). Both reminiscence and nostalgia are therefore seen as highly substantive memory markers in the participants' perception of the significance of music in their lives. All of them attach high importance to the position of past recollections in their musical narratives and in some cases the impact they have had on their lives pre and post retirement. This theme of memories encapsulates the interpretation of the participants' thoughts concerning both reminiscences and nostalgia. The overall focus of the theme is on family relationships and music, illustrated by a variety of examples that illuminate the variation of what familial memories can be, followed by some recollections of significant musical performances.

The dynamics of family associated memories can create a sense of positivity whereby recollections of the past are permanently enriching in the present. This is demonstrated in the quote by Sylvia who describes an association between a piece of music and her husband.

*Sylvia: Well, the one that comes immediately to mind would be the music that we had at our wedding...and that was the Mozart Laudate Dominum, so I would think every, every time I hear that, that occasion...that, that's the two of us.*

This romanticised account is framed within a previous era, and her longing for a sentimentalised emotional state manifests itself in an

attempt to recreate that idealised past time by reproducing the occasion through listening to this specific piece of music. In essence the memory of Mozart's Laudate Dominum at her wedding has become for Sylvia, a symbol of her marriage to Neil which appears to be of psychological comfort to her. When asked to think of a significant musical memory Sylvia states that the recall of this piece is 'immediate', suggesting its pivotal location in her memory which allows her to identify with and express herself as part of a couple. Frith (2002) suggests that by taking a detailed look at why individuals attend to a specific piece of music at a particular time is of particular interest in furthering our understanding of the use of music and its impact on social connections.

Participants also experience memories of feelings closely associated with family loved ones as shown in this quote from Neil, where he describes the link between the Neruda trumpet concerto and his son who is a professional trumpet player.

*Neil: ...the Neruda trumpet concerto was the one...eh.....that my son played that....ehm when he was at the junior academy ehm.....and that was just a wonderful experience of eh....of, of, of serious joy ehm.....and the sin of pride and all of these things that here was your son playing this wonderful music and.....eh it was great.....and similarly.....ehm.....any, anything that we hear Peter\*\*\*\*\* playing in...you know you can go to some way of doing it and the trumpet will sound..*

Neil's recollection of this particular piece of music is highly influential and it appears to provide him with a degree of inner pride and joyfulness.

Interestingly he refers to the delight he experiences in listening to his son as the 'sin of pride' which was the foremost of the early Christian schema of seven deadly sins (Sullender, 2014). This scripturally associated phrase implies a preoccupation with self, however I feel that here Neil is not demonstrating self-focussed attention. On the contrary he appears to regard the beauty of the music and its interpretation by his son as the main focal point and consequently his attention is placed on Peter rather than on himself. Nostalgia is often defined as a bittersweet longing for the past, but this doesn't appear to be the case for Neil. Retirement is affording him the opportunity to be 'able to go to more things that Peter is involved in' with his wife and he is thereby able to continue to build on these memories.

For Ewan too, memories of family pride seem to arise, not in himself but in his daughter's achievements. Young people often experience problems at school and for her this manifested itself in a difficulty with maths. Ewan utilises the powerful noun 'struggle' with its connotations of conflict and strife. This clearly must have been a challenging time for the family, but Ewan chooses to focus on the important part that music played in constructing a positive outcome by facilitating skill and confidence in his daughter. It appears that cognition or knowledge of the situation has been

realigned with emotion to produce a feeling of satisfaction and contentment.

*Ewan: I was just proud...of her and pleased for her! Uhm, in her case.....when she went to the senior school.....it was music that helped her realise that she could do things well and it helped her in other areas of her, of her education. The truth is she struggled with maths....through school.....uhm.....but it, the music at least helped her to understand that she could do things extremely well and it did help her in the rest of her education as well.*

Ewan seems to reach out and absorb the theory that music provides a source of salvation and in this case was the channel through which his daughter was able to construct a positive sense of self. This certainty of music's positive effects pervades Ewan's life and he reveals a strong belief in its use as a means of lending encouragement and support within his family unit.

In addition to partner and offspring associated memories, the other significant groupings referred to by most of the participants in their historical narratives were parents and grandparents, as the following extract from Sally highlights.

*Sally: ...there was that kind of encouragement I suppose within the home and I...my parents.....I think they were quite musical, Mum used to sing quite a bit when she was round---doing things around the house. And my Dad liked classical music. Ehm.....I don't remember them going to concerts very much or anything like that.....but I suppose there was an interest in music uhm.....and then well my Dad used to buy me records.....you know as I was getting old enough to sort of appreciate classical music in particular he used to buy me.*

In this comment, her use of the words 'I suppose' and 'I think' appear to indicate that she is being challenged to reflect on the degree of influence of her mother's casual singing around the house and her father's love of classical music. Interestingly Sally creates a narrative to try and make sense of how these early influences affected her musical development. Emerging from this is a slightly fragmented series of memories before alighting on the possibility that support from her father through gifts of records must have had an impact, although her picture is one of marginal encouragement.

In comparison the following account by Jean clearly shows how her grandmother effectively conceptualised and enacted the role of music tutor for her young granddaughter. The attraction of listening to the piano and the desire to learn captivated Jean as a child and she recalls her grandmother's special role as the originator of her musical interest. Having the opportunity to play the piano has proved to be a permanently enriching experience for Jean.

*Jean: Music has been part of my life from when I was three or four years old I suppose....um.....I....when I was really young my Grandma had a piano and she would play piano and she was the first one, because I was so keen to play this piano, she was the first one to help me do it, just as a little girl would...*

This is an especially powerful memory as it highlights the appreciation of her grandmother's involvement in supporting the construction of Jean's

self-concept as a pianist, which is clearly of importance to her. Unlike the weaker input from Sally's family, Jean's memories of this early support are strong. She reflects on the intervention of her grandmother who, as the original source of encouragement is a prime example of the nurturing motivation of a key family member.

Thus far, the participants' narratives would support the suggestion by Barrett et al (2010), although unresearched, that music evoked nostalgia in the older generation would produce feelings of positivity (see section 2.3). However recollections of the past can also trigger particularly painful emotions, and some of the participants recalled memories of lost loved ones and negative situations surrounding family members.

*Sylvia: ...my Dad died when I was only 10....so after that I kept thinking ehm....'He would've liked me to do something with music' so I think that was always at the back of my mind and going through school – I enjoyed school and I enjoyed learning and....enjoyed lots of subjects, but I just had made up my mind I was going to do music.*

Sylvia is concerned here with the loss of her father at a young age and she is aware that her decision to take music as a career was largely based on her assumption that it would have been his choice of path for her. In essence her chosen profession was influenced by his death. Close scrutiny of her school life reveals pleasure in her situation and the learning process, however there is a sensation that her fate was sealed by her need to posthumously please her father. She clearly realises that she had an



interest in other subjects and could have taken a variety of career options but the strength of her attachment to her father was of paramount importance. As Sylvia's later narrative highlights, her career as a music teacher was not a happy one and she has a profound regret that she did not take more charge of her destiny. This suggests that she felt the powerful and engulfing nature of his legacy and appears not to have had the strength to fight a decision which was clearly not in her long-term interests.

This pattern of negative reconstructions of memory can also be found in Lucy's narrative referencing intergenerational issues, although for her there is also a positive aspect.

*Lucy: .....I think of Gerontius I remember that and the fact I sat there with tears rolling down my face because it made me think of my father who had died, well he died when I was 8.....and.....and that was a very, very huge loss because for varying reasons I was extremely more attached to my father than is quite normal because my mum had been ill so I was very, very, attached to him and it was a very...very huge loss when he died at a time of course when in the...middle 50s.....uhm.....you just...end of war people were used to, well not used to but had suffered a huge amount of bereavement and nobody thought a child needed anything so.....uhm.....that is something that keeps coming back to me and music will often bring it back – particularly Gerontius uhm....so that was....was something that was exceptionally...uhm special and important and that went right deep inside to be retained for all times.*

For Lucy, music's power to evoke strong memories of the relationship with her father is extremely distressing. Her emphasis on the somewhat inadequate parent/child attachment theories of post war Britain highlight

the burden of a traumatic bereavement which she still carries. Associations of people with specific pieces of music can generate emotional outpourings and this manifests itself in Lucy's reaction to Elgar's 'Dream of Gerontius'. Her childhood anguish is reconstructed every time she hears this work and she describes it as entering the very core of her being. This contributes to a cumulative development of strong emotive feelings which appear to be permanent. Lucy's repetitive use of the word 'very' and her emphasis on the abnormal level of attachment she had to her father suggests that she requires an answer to the question of why her childhood bereavement needs were not met. She appears to acknowledge the profound emotional effect this had on her, both at that time and now. Other children had their fathers but she has been denied a long term paternal relationship and this strengthens her memories of that distressing period. The association of Elgar's work with her father acts as a memory which to a certain extent she appears to treasure. Her reference to the memories as being 'retained for all times' illustrate her need for the support of a continuous link with her father through this piece of music, which was born the past and projects into her future in retirement.

Despite the focus on familial reminiscences, a salient feature of the analysis is the recollection of significant performances and I have decided

to include these in this section as they highlight the multifaceted nature of musical memories. As I anticipated, all of the respondents reported on significant occasions that conjure up memories from their past where they had participated either as listeners or performers. When the participants reflect on their performances they often recall a positive time associated with a positive sense of self. These memories were recalled to help maintain some self-esteem in the present. The following extracts illustrate the meaningfulness of performing in well - known places.

*Sally: ...we used to sing in the Royal College of Music, so I really thought (laughs) I'd hit the big time with that!*

*John: I joined the school choir and eventually became the principal tenor in their operas and I sang Sir Walter Raleigh for example, which is in Merry...eh no, eh, yes Sir Walter Raleigh in Merry England and that was performed in the Theatre Royal.*

These quotes effectively communicate how Sally and John engaged with the musical performance on one hand but on the other hand their recollections are shaped by the importance of the places where they sang. There is an implication of a sense of boastfulness attached to their music making as demonstrated by Sally's terminology of 'hitting the big time' by singing in one of Britain's major music conservatoires. John too is keen to point out that he performed at a prestigious theatre and in addition provides the information that he sang not only as a tenor but as the 'principal' tenor. These quotes suggest that music supports a feeling of self-satisfaction with the consequent sense of wellbeing. Both of these

respondents still regard singing to be an important part of their lives in retirement and continue to engage with it positively.

In the following extract Eileen mentally reorganises the features of a particular stairwell in the college of her student years and recalls the acoustics in that specific area where she performed with the college madrigal group. Here she marries the structure of the building and the structure of the sounds which when combined produced a beautiful effect that suggests that musical performance can haunt physical spaces. Her memory of the exact pieces being sung is patchy but this is a minor detail to her as the reminiscence of this special performance location is more significant.

*Eileen: I can't remember what it was that we sang I mean it was so many years ago 1970 something um...it was in the stairwell 'cos there were different different houses that eh...were around the college 'cos it was up up in (place name) ..and uh they used different they were older houses as well as as as a newly built block and uh.....and it was in in this stairwell that we sang um...it'll be around Christmas time and uh.....it was just the sound that....that was made in in that area that that really ...you could hear everybody's voice and it...oh it was beautiful.*

Eileen continues to paint a comparable picture in her account of the acoustics in her local church and identifies another stairwell there which produces a similar acoustic effect and thereby unearths memories of the college madrigal group performances. Her role appears to have changed within her narrative from the young college student to the mature retiree,

but these roles are interchangeable to her as she is psychologically drawn to the memories of certain performance spaces.

John is a highly creative individual and a keen semi-professional artist and his descriptions of memories from past performances are especially colourful as he has the ability to recreate an event through his talent for narration. He takes delight in recounting his engagement with music as an aesthetic experience which clearly provides him with a feeling of fulfilment. In the following extract he vividly illustrates a concert performance that he attended some years ago with his wife Jean in which he demonstrates a clear sense of self and of others.

*John: I think the most striking bit of live music that I have ever heard was em, Timony---Timony the conductor was Russian, Temirkanov, who conducted quite a lot in the (name of place) Concert Hall and he conducted one orchestral piece when Jean\*\*\*\*\* and I were there and it was just sublime. I tell you what it was, I can't remember the name, but it was, it started with sun rising over the dawn and he controlled the orchestra in such a way – this was the national orchestra – he controlled the orchestra in such a way that you could almost feel the mist rising in his music and it was absolutely sublime. And the whole piece was played at a beautiful tempo, nothing rushed about it and he accelerated the pace when necessary and of course it was as well, but that was the one, most outstanding orchestral concert that we ever went to.*

The role of music in such an experience appears to act as a cathartic release as John focusses on the transcendent effect of the sound under the baton of a truly professional conductor. His use of powerful adjectives such as 'sublime' and 'outstanding' shows how he identifies with the power of the music at this event and encapsulates the entire experience

as the most exceptional concert he has ever attended. As an artist he is able to identify with the music by commenting on it through the use of picture painting in the same way that a painter colours the canvas. John metaphorically appears to internalise the baton as a painting brush which is under the complete control of the conductor. This was a highly valuable experience for John and provided a memory which, when recalled, with a sense of pleasure and wellbeing.

Examining the participants' accounts of music associated memories has given a unique insight into the multifaceted construct of memory through recollections of the past. These reminiscences indicate the power of music in conjuring up significant episodes with familial and performance associations, and enable a deeper understanding of the meaning of, and support from music in the participants' lives. Music acts as an important facilitator of past memories which are predominantly positive with associated pieces providing a meaningful link. The respondents' shared insights of thoughts and related emotions are at times almost tangible and findings indicate a connection between these and the role of music in their lives in retirement, which are further discussed in Chapter 8.

Having considered the centrality of music and the impact of memory, the following section focusses on the participants' musical engagement with

others in the social setting. The term engagement is utilised to attend to the social aspect of performance and listening habits both currently and in the past.

### **6.2.3 Music in the social setting**

As discussed in Chapter 4 Heidegger describes man as Dasein, or existing in the world, involved in activities with others and with tools and knowledge constructed by them. Given that most humans are companionable beings by nature and seek to engage socially on a regular basis, it is logical to surmise that much of their musical participation and consequent enjoyment will come from interaction with other people. Previous research on this topic has revealed the benefits of participating in musical activities with others who are in accord with one's own interests. Response from the participants in this investigation aligns them with the results from other studies, for example Pitts (2012) illustrates how adult musicians engaged in community music-making experience feelings of positivity through involvement with others.

From an idiographic stance it is worthwhile to take time to consider some of the respondents' accounts in order to assist in creating further insight into how they encounter music as individuals and within their couple relationship. Several of the participants focus on the pleasurable aspect of

music in social settings and describe it as 'fabulous' and 'wonderful'. Graham summarises this by commenting that music provides 'just good fun being with other people basically'. Here he illustrates a fundamental characteristic of being alive which is the prospect of experiencing fun and fulfilment in social relationships with others. Neil tackles this further by portraying music as 'a collective experience' which is multi-faceted.

*Neil: ...well it's a collective experience in as far as.....ehm.....making music..... and when I, when I was still playing.....ehm.....and playing in, in amateur orchestras, I mean some of them.....ehm....I played for a while in the string quartet.....ehm.....played in the school orchestra, played in the youth orchestra.....eh and so on so all of these are, are, are, are very collective experiences singing in the choir is a very collective experience.....going to a concert, the, the reactions you have to what is happening is partly influenced by the collective of the action of the, of the audience....*

Not only does Neil allude to performing as a member of a group, in this case a school orchestra and a choir, but he extends the experience outwardly to incorporate the responses of the various audiences in attendance. He makes use of the noun 'collective' on four occasions to emphasise the value of shared-ness in societal experiences. He continues his narrative by describing a recent visit to hear Mozart's 'The Magic Flute' opera with his wife and how his enjoyment of the production was 'hugely dependent' on the activity on the stage and in the orchestral pit plus the 'general ambiance' around him. This need to feel the support of like-minded people largely unknown to him on a personal level provides a powerful source of motivation on the road to his enjoyment and



satisfaction. Utilising a group influence to facilitate a sense of connection is a highly constructive way for Neil to develop the social benefits of music and forge a joint identity with others.

One of our basic human needs is to nurture our social identity by belonging to something greater than ourselves, for example membership of groups which enhance our self-esteem (Tajfel, 1978); for Sally that need is met by being part of a choir. The concept of togetherness as a group is important to Sally who has participated for most of her life in choirs and sees her choral singing as a key part of her social life.

*Sally: Ehm, I think there's probably a lot.....uhm.....of emotion comes from.....ehm this feeling of team work and group work and coming together as a unified body and producing this lovely sounds, ehm..... ..obviously, well I would say probably it's, it's half and half I would guess really. Not just hearing the music but actually just making the music ourselves.*

Sally describes her engagement as a member of the team, which implies the formation of a joint identity on the part of all the collaborators. The analogy of a 'unified body' as opposed to individual singers suggests that she relishes that part of the experience deeming the sound and its production to be equal in value. Not only is she consciously aware that she is part of a team but she refers to it as a 'feeling', which is more abstract and sensory in nature. Fortunately for Sally her husband Nick is fully supportive of her needs and takes his place in the collective

experience through attendance at her concerts. The role of supportive partners and its effect on relationships is detailed in section 8.3.1.

Apart from references to Sally's musical activities, Nick himself describes the music in his social life within the context of participation with friends through 'going to the music room at lunchtime' to listen to music. Several other participants also associate music within the domestic social setting such as occasions when guests are invited. They reflect on the phenomenon of social integration with family and friends and the benefit that music brings to these occasions as highlighted in these two extracts.

*Ewan: ...if we've got friends round....then we'll put music on in the background. You know that could be something from Lindisfarne maybe to Sylvester to uhm....well probably not, probably less Lindisfarne because they, they sing songs.....it's probably more....it's sort of like classical music that we've got.*

*Jean: ...even in our marriage we have always had that um...we have a large group of friends eh and when we when we have a get together ...uh for some reason or something like that everybody or whether we're planning a Burn's Supper or eh a Christmas thing everybody knows that they're going to have to do a turn ..right...and that's all part of the pleasure for us for John and I in organising it ...you know...when we've had Burn's Suppers eh it's it....it gives us something to plan together.*

Ewan's excerpt conveys his appreciation of the use of music in order to create a positive ambience, rendering a feeling of wellbeing for his guests whilst in his home. This appears to be another instance of social collectivity as demonstrated in the previous quotes from Neil and Sally. Ewan's implied rejection of music with lyrics in favour of classical music suggests that he has given careful thought to the various genres which

will act efficiently in the role of background entertainment. In his narrative Ewan admits that he and his wife rarely sit down to listen to music in the home environment unless they are entertaining guests. Interestingly he doesn't seem to think of music listening with just his wife as a social occurrence. The question therefore arises as to what this says about their social interaction as a couple; it is possible that Ewan views the marital partnership to be a single entity.

Jean integrates physically and emotionally with friends to help manage her social relationships in the musical context. Further strengthening of this relational intimacy is witnessed in her description of how she relishes controlling the organisation of musical events in her home with her husband and it is this empowerment which brings a sense of closeness and enjoyment. There is clearly a benefit to the partnership and Jean reasons that it affords them the opportunity to fashion a social event together. The mention of 'everyone knows' that they are going to be required to perform a party piece at her social gatherings supports the notion that this is a requirement of attendance and appears to show a slightly self-indulgent attitude on Jean's part. However she embraces the attendant responsibility of organising events which will instil guests with a sense of wellbeing, and one would surmise that they are supportive and willing to be part of Jean's need for a collective social experience.

In summary, the implication of musical engagement within the social structure falls under various categories for the participants. Performing with groups, having fun listening with friends, employing background music and organising musical participation within the home environment are all means by which music is experienced socially. An important thread throughout this emergent theme seems to be the importance of collectivity and a sense of wellbeing encountered on inclusion with partners and others. Membership of a perceived group, whether a large choir or small cluster of friends, allows the respondents to identify with others and to participate in group activities with like-minded people. The sense of feeling part of a team clearly shapes enjoyment; how this can be bolstered with the support of a partner as highlighted by Sally and Jean emerges here as a key insight. This appears to be an on-going process as the couples move through the retirement years and forms a natural link between individual and joint ageing identities. The final emergent theme under the banner of 'The musical relationship story' investigates the notion of music as a communication tool and how the respondents make use of music's properties to connect with each other.

#### **6.2.4 Music as a channel of communication**

Much research (DeNora, 2000; Ruud, 2010) has established how musical habits shape relations between intimates and friends and provide

reference markers for a collective identity. Many studies have shown it to be an important outlet for interaction with others which facilitates the sharing of emotions and meanings within their environment. Hargreaves, MacDonald and Miell (2005, p.6) 'propose three determinants of the musical communication process...namely the characteristics of the music itself; those of the people involved (i.e. the composer, performer, and/or listener); and those of the situation in which it occurs' all of which have a mutual influence over each other. This emergent theme looks at how the respondents interact with music and utilise it to converse with their partners and significant others, both physically and psychologically. The focus from the narratives was directed mainly towards verbal interaction following attendance at a performance, silent communication during a shared musical experience and communication with those involved in the performance (live or recorded). Interestingly there was scant reference to communication through joint musical preferences.

The following extract shows how Graham verbally interacts with his wife after attending an arts related event.

*Graham: Whether it's music or, or not...or whether it's a play....ehm....you feel you can talk to somebody about it with somebody who has shared that experience with you, you can talk about it, you might not talk much about it but you can say 'That was, that was a good song' or 'That's a....I wonder where this play is going?' whereas if you're on your own.....you don't have the possibility.....*

Graham's communication with Lucy is a telling of himself in his own words and this is clearly reflected by her responding to him as she has shared the same experiences. This is an important factor in their relationship as their conversation assists in the creation and sustenance of their lifespan joint identity. Graham compares this combined interaction with solitary engagement and acknowledges that verbal communication need not be lengthy to be effective. This develops the finding from the first emergent theme in this section concerning the centrality of music in the respondents' lives, by highlighting music as an intrinsic companion in its own right and here as a catalyst for human interaction. This is characteristic of the responses from other participants as illustrated here by Sylvia.

*Sylvia: ...you're sitting with somebody but you're not sure what they're....feeling if they're responding to the music in the same way you do and it's nice if you can say afterwards....you know 'Oh wasn't that special the way they did that or sang that' or whatever....and you, you realise you're, you're sharing the same experience from the music I suppose but.....ehm....I hadn't thought about it really, just you're aware of your response to the music, but you don't know whether the other person is feeling the same.....unless you talk about it afterwards...*

From her words 'I hadn't thought about it really' it is evident that Sylvia is being challenged to consider the psychological meaning of sharing musical experiences with her husband despite attending concerts regularly with Neil and having his support at her choir's events. The interview appears to have encouraged her to reflect on the value of joint reactions to shared engagement. Sylvia experiences the phenomenon of

anticipation in the sense that she is unaware of Neil's responses and she faces a feeling of aesthetic expectation which can only be resolved by post-concert discussion. This offers her a sense of excitement through the hope that her musical companion is reacting in a way which is in tune with her sentiments. Communing with her husband brings her to the realisation that verbal interaction is a positive experience and a unique feature of her interactive world. It appears that the cumulative effect of this verbal synergy of cognition, beliefs and opinions constitutes an important part of Sylvia's relationship with Neil.

Husband and wife, John and Jean, also clearly value the role of verbal exchange as demonstrated in these quotes.

*John: But I like, I like going to musical things like that with Jean\*\*\*\*, so we can discuss what we thought about it and how we thought it was played and what the reaction of the audience was and where things could've been improved and em, we, we, enjoy talking about music together when we go to concerts and music things you know.*

*Jean: Yes, somebody to be able to enjoy it with to discuss something with to argue about something you know um.....I think just .....just to have a companion to uh who understood and was also affected um by music.*

John's account captures his enjoyment in relation to experiencing a live concert event with Jean. Cognitive interaction through perceptive thoughts and opinions facilitate a holistic sense of wellbeing in this couple's relationship. Communication in this instance is intrinsically linked with their mutual journey through life and the subsequent ease

with which they converse. Jean's use of the term 'argue' is not meant in a combative manner but as a discursive method for promoting individual opinions. She continues her narrative by reflecting on the breakup of her first marriage and the solitary years before she met John when music and musical communication were absent from her life. She now emphasizes the importance of a common experience and how concert going enables them to sit together and discuss why they did or did not like what they had heard. Further into her narrative Jean demonstrates a sense of silent communication with John as shown in this extract.

*Jean: .....I think you know you can have companionship with a friend just a friend and you can go to something and enjoy it .....but...if you have a close relationship with somebody and you both have a a really positive experience from either a show or concert or just listening to some music then it sort of draws you closer together... um...it's it's ....it's funny to describe it's almost just like being ....it's like being there on your own but not on your own do you know what I mean it's you're you're at ease.... and you're..... I think you understand each other's minds, you don't always do that with a a friend you can't always get that relationship.*

Jean appears to differentiate between bodily and spiritual interaction whilst attending a musical performance with John in contrast to going with just a friend. A key point here is the suggestion of an ethereal method of communication which is reliant on mind-reading through subconscious thought between intimates. Clearly the couple have a strong personal connection which goes further than friendship and this brings with it a deeper understanding and bond. Jean conveys the notion that



this extends beyond verbal communication and therefore highlights the dyadic nature of identity: individual and joint.

As mentioned earlier, listening to music exposes individuals to a situation whereby they can communicate emotions and opinions through those involved in the production of the performance. In the extract below Neil communicates through Mozart's Flute and Harp Concerto by making a connection between the listening experience and his response.

*Neil: The first time I heard live, the...Mozart's Concerto for...Flute and Harp I think it is.....eh it was a family holiday with the children on the beach, a beach concert in [name of French village]...and every time I hear that I'm back in that beach in [name of French village] and the children are there and my brother's family were there also and I can picture the, the, the orchestra up at the stage on the beach and so....you know all the emotion from that ehm.....so I think it's a, it's the...it's a mixture of the, the consciously constructed emotion from the composer.....ehm....to some extent and your sort of personal....your, your personal engagement eh with the music.*

The significance of the impact of a first encounter with the work and its associations with loved ones demonstrates how the music, the composer, the performers and the environment all provide a communicative synaesthesia. The stimulation of this particular musical composition evokes a positive emotional feeling for Neil and communicates a 'picture' in his mind of a specific occasion. It is clear that emotional communication with music is an iterative and continuing process as Neil experiences these feelings whenever he encounters this piece. He interprets the composer's emotional intentions to be deliberate constructs and thereby

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perceives the overall experience to be a combination of these and his own personal intentions. Although he states that he continuously returns to the same mental image, I suggest that Neil's communicative experience on revisiting this piece varies, as his emotional procedures will dynamically change depending on his personal state of mind and environment at the time of listening. I discuss the aspect of emotional reaction to musical engagement more fully in section 7.3.2.

This emergent theme has shown the respondents communicating with each other in differing ways and sharing their emotions, experiences and opinions during joint musical engagement. Music acts as a channel for communication and a means for the participants to commune with each other through verbal and silent interaction and hence experience a feeling of assuredness and wellbeing. Anticipation of a partner's thoughts concerning a musical event creates an impression of positivity and an eager anticipation that joint responses are sympathetic. Communication through music allows the contributors to tell their stories of self in their own words and this in turn allows them to sustain individual and joint identities which continue and develop through the retirement years.

The next section covers the second superordinate theme 'Insecurities' and is concerned with the fragmentation of the musical journey when issues of confidence and perceived musical limitations arise.

### **6.3 Insecurities**

I have chosen to include this superordinate theme in my study as half of the participants regularly endure feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence in their musical abilities, and this consequently appears to impact on their musical identities as individuals and as partners. This is not an uncommon phenomenon as western music culture has historically been entrenched in highlighting the more elite professional performers. In response to this, an investigation by Bailey and Davidson (2005) looked into the effects of group singing amongst marginalised and middle-class singers. The study revealed the many benefits of musical engagement; however a fear of participation due to society's elitist opinions on musicality appeared to affect the realisation of full potential. A further study into perceived 'tone deafness' amongst university students by Cuddy et al (2005) indicated that an individual's professed lack of musicality can be linked to a self-assessment of weak singing ability. They suggest that these attitudes may potentially be associated with negative childhood memories, society's pressure for success and expectations within peer group comparisons. Welch (2006) further supports these

issues within the realisation of vocal potential and reinforces the idea of how musical development can be hindered by negative self-perceptions. Whilst these investigations are primarily centred on vocal ability they serve to represent the numerous confidence issues reported by many amateur musicians. Results from this current study fully support these previous findings and expand on this theme by interpreting the participants' personal musical 'insecurities' in retirement and within the couple domain.

'Insecurities' has been positioned in this section of the analytical layout as it involves a journey, but one that has been fragmented due to negative self-perceptions. Five of the respondents feel uncertainty concerning their musical competence for a variety of reasons including the exclusion from, or cessation of musical training at a young age, lack of support from role models and memories of past relationships. Previous research in the field of musical influences during the lifespan (Manturzevska, 1990: Burland & Davidson, 2004) plus indications that a lack of confidence creates a state of permanent uncertainty with the unfamiliar (Luhmann, 1988: Jalava, 2003) substantiates the sense of musical impenetrability for these five individuals. This is in marked contrast to the positivity of the other participants who demonstrate that through confidence, pleasurable

emotions and high expectations from their interaction with music are rarely disappointed.

### **6.3.1 Musical confidence issues and limitations**

As previously mentioned, narratives from five of the participants contain detailed descriptions of their feelings of relatedness and autonomy when experiencing musical activities. For the remaining five, positive interaction with music has a fragmented history with an emphasis on lack of confidence. From this, Sylvia and Neil plus Jean and John are the only two couples who are confidently united by their own individual musical abilities. The route to being seen as ‘musical’ is strongly linked with tuition and as these five respondents received minimal or no training they view their own abilities as inadequate.

Eileen has enjoyed singing throughout her life but is largely untrained, however by contrast her husband Ewan is a skilled amateur musician who has extensive experience as a choral director. Even though there exists mutual support within the marital relationship Eileen concedes that her husband is ‘much more uh adept at uh talking about music than I am really he’s got a you know a...better memory of what these uh, especially classical music’. Her apparent respect for his more advanced

ability to play and read music is of value to her and she relies on his encouragement.

Despite a close relationship with singing through membership of various choirs Eileen uses the word 'confidence' regularly in her narratives and is clearly aware of her musical limitations. She describes herself as not being 'a great musician' and this seems to be her reasoning for diminished feelings of competence and autonomy.

*Eileen: I think I was quite nervous at first 'cos I know that I had a disability in that I didn't read music you know whereas other people did but there...you know...I obviously was able to ...to uh.....keep up with everybody else by by listening which I still do I'm not a natural, I don't sight read.*

*Eileen: I've got the church choir but I don't I'm not .....joined anything else since 'cos I ....they're sort of um...groups that .....the choirs that there are I sometimes feel I don't think I'd measure up to that you know 'cos you've got to audition this that and the other and I sort of think um...you know I I can't sight read you see so .....that is a difficulty I think um...and so I've never felt that I'd measure up to that again because I suppose it's....I suppose you lose some confidence.*

The lack of sight-reading ability seems to be the common thread running through these extracts. Its perceived associations with musical knowledge and insight (Mishra, 2014) lead Eileen to describe her shortcomings as a 'disability'; a very powerful noun to associate with the weaknesses in a musical skill, as it carries connotations of a physical impairment. Eileen continually internalises this perceived imperfection and displays anxious thoughts about her inferiority to others in this area. This suggests that she lacks the self-esteem to deal with the frustrations of learning new

music and appears to have a fear of failure. Her personal desire to contribute to the success of the choral groups is compromised by her heightened feelings of anxiety about her sight-reading limitations. Eileen deconstructs much of her musical life through negatively inferred phrases such as 'I'm not a natural' and 'I don't think I'd measure up' which suggest she is struggling to find her place within her own musical identity. There appears to be an inner inquiry about the validity of her contribution to the groups in which she sings, which seems to slightly mar her overall satisfaction in musical participation.

The other four respondents with musical confidence concerns make up two married couples. Sally and Lucy are very keen on musical participation but their husbands, Nick and Graham as seen in section 6.2.1, have a lesser interest in music for different reasons. I will now deal with these participants as individuals and then in the couple relationship. Like Eileen, Sally's confidence problems are found in her sight-reading limitations. She describes herself as 'not a brilliant sight-reader' and admits that she probably hasn't the confidence in her own abilities that perhaps she ought to have. Due to this, preliminary choir rehearsals are found to be tricky and therefore not particularly enjoyable. Once overcoming the initial sight-reading issues she appears to have the

strength and courage to interact musically with other choir members in the overall relaxed environment of a rehearsal.

*Sally: An interesting thing is that I always find that I enjoy rehearsals for concerts much more enjoyable than the concerts themselves. I think it's probably the bearing this responsibility for getting---for not getting it note perfect.*

Sally acknowledges a difference between rehearsals and performances and for her, confidence is achievable when she participates in the former, and despite knowing she has the ability she baulks at presenting her 'perfect singing self' in the more intense concert situation. Her husband Nick experiences similar feelings of inadequacy and explains that he sings 'but not like Sally'. He clearly appreciates her vocal ability but his own self-confidence is affected by his experiences at school as this extract shows.

*Nick: ...when I went to secondary school I had the experience that quite a lot of people of our generation have had, that you had to audition for the choir and eh, I got turned down because you weren't, you weren't, you couldn't sing the note that was given you off the piano or something like that. And that I guess sort of...you think 'Well I used to sing, now I'm not wanted!' so you're sort of turned off for a bit.*

Nick continues to report that this experience of being rejected possibly affected him more than he thought at the time, as it closed the door on singing for him for a considerable length of time and even now he only sings when in church. The contrast to his junior school choir with its all-inclusive policy is quite marked and he has been left with negative



memories and feeling rather intimidated by the singing process. The phrase 'turned off' seemingly corresponds to a light switch which presumably can at some stage be turned on again. Fortunately the feeling of belonging to a church congregation and sharing music in that aspect with others, plus his support of Sally are very important factors in their relationship so there is a positive element to his story.

This theme of rejection can also be identified in Lucy's narrative. In the extract below she remembers a time when she was made to feel embarrassed and distressed following an episode involving rejection at school by a teacher.

*Lucy: ...there was a very unfortunate and sad music teacher who.....had us all singing in class in the first year and....uhm....she reckoned there was somebody in that group who couldn't sing. And she went down everybody making each individual sing a scale – well....you can guess what happened to me, I was flat as a pancake, so was the girl next to me who was indeed the culprit. 'You girls must never, ever sing again!' .....that was a bit of an unfortunate thing because the.....that was what I wanted to do.*

This incident appears to have changed the route of Lucy's musical journey for her entire time at senior school until she had the courage to revisit the situation with the teacher in her final year and gain acceptance into the choir. Not being allowed to participate in something which she loved made her feel humiliated and she felt burdened by the label of a non-singer which in fact turned out at a later stage to be inaccurate. Lucy's narrative contains many poignant moments of insecurity and none more

so than her description of her love of music from a very young age, which was dampened by an aunt who likened her singing and dancing to ‘a bull in a china shop’. As a result she developed the feeling of being ‘fairly useless to everybody’ and this was not assisted by the loss of her father at the age of eight and having an unwell mother. Despite all of this Lucy expresses her passionate need for music as shown in section 6.2.1. and the fragmentations of her early experiences appear to have unified into a more positive cohesive whole, partly with Graham, during her retirement years.

Graham has no musical background training and seems outwardly contented in his current situation, claiming that he is ‘not a music buff!’ He reveals in his narrative that his first wife was a piano teacher and that he has had issues with the association between music and a partner. However he is aware and respectful of Lucy’s superior knowledge and passion for music and appears to be comfortable to let her take the lead in their musical activities. Graham thinks he knows his musical limitations and states that ‘I’m not musical, or at least I don’t think I’m musical’, but this self-questioning challenges his curiosity about whether in fact he does have a stronger musical identity than he likes to portray.

*Graham: I know that the Radio 3.....ehm.....commentators will say ‘That’s a very good contrapuntal movement’ and I haven’t the foggiest what that means and they know that means it’s good music, but I just don’t understand enough about it.*

*People go on about the tone and colour of music and I don't understand that either.*

As a highly intellectual man this seems at first glance to be surprising, as it could be surmised that he would be eager to increase his knowledge base. The linguistic use of the terms 'people go on' and 'I haven't the foggiest idea' portray a sense of irritation and he seems to protest very strongly about his lack of musical perception, almost more often than is necessary, which raises doubts that he is entirely sincere. It is suggestive of someone trying to convince themselves and others of the authenticity of their comments and beliefs, and experiencing frustration with those who know more. This is highlighted by some confusion in later in his interview when he confesses that he goes to concerts partly for 'my own musical education'.

*Graham: I suppose.....to understand music, to appreciate it at a deep level.....to.....have lots of knowledge about composers and whether they're highbrow, low brow, middle brow.....ehm.....to be able to.....ehm.....judge....or I suppose.....to be able to tell the difference between different recordings.....there used to be a programme on Radio 3, I don't know whether it still is – Edward Greenfield's Musical Requests and he would.....ehm....compare 10 different recordings of Beethoven's 9th and I couldn't care a button as long as it's the music it's the music! You know and I couldn't care a button if Karajan's recording or anybody else's recording.....they're all the same to me so ehm I just ehm.....if you're musical you'll be able to indulge in that kind of.....conversation – 'So yes, Karajan's is a brilliant recording, in the second movement he really got it right'.....it's garbage as far as I'm concerned! (laughs).*

From the above extract it can be witnessed that he stressing his carefree attitude to musical commentary. It is possible that he feels musically

inadequate, and therefore screens this by emphasising his lack of knowledge, experience and skills. His disdain for indulgence in sophisticated musical conversation suggests he views this as a form of self-gratification for those with the qualifications to participate. The metaphorical use of the term 'garbage' to describe musical commentary reduces it to a lowly status and this is in marked contrast to his willingness to mention his knowledge of Karajan, a famous conductor, and his confession that he used to listen to a classical music programme on Radio 3. Either way, both references provide self-help in salvaging his self-esteem. Whilst he is content to allow Lucy to be the dominant force concerning music, and reveals in a later statement that he is happy to 'tag along' with her to concerts, I suggest that perhaps Graham's intellect is being affronted and that he struggles to be more open to his real feelings and desires.

Another view of Graham's narrative demonstrates potentially a slightly more manipulative stance on his part whereby he presents a lack of knowledge as a means of self-defence. He clearly has an awareness of music through his listing of musicians, radio programmes and classical pieces however he deliberately distances himself from these. Whereas the other 'musically insecure' participants are transparent in their narratives, Graham is more calculating as he appears to want to resist

having a musical identity. This is bound up in something more complex which may be associated with his first marriage to a professional musician. Initially after the relationship breakup he wanted to distance himself from music which he associates with his first wife. However as he is now happily settled with Lucy he is prepared to cope with musical engagement and in some aspects appears to be acting in a slightly buffoonish manner: interested but seemingly clueless.

This section deals mainly with the personal judgements and feelings by the five participants with minimal to no formal musical training. The perceptions of their musical expertise varies, however they all recount low value self-assessments in their stories. Despite support from their partners, self-generated feelings of inadequacy and lack of confidence are found in their narratives. The cognitive symptoms and consequences of low self-esteem are manifest in the inability to sight-read and to engage in intellectual musical conversation. This highlights their self-deprecation about their own abilities and the impact on their musical identity. From a positive stance, these negativities do not appear to affect the marital relationship and all of the respondents respect and value the expertise of their partners. Further details of the role of music in the couples' relationships are discussed in Chapter 8.

## 6.4 Chapter conclusions

This chapter has considered the strength of musical engagement experienced by the participants throughout the lifespan journey. For the majority, music appears to be positioned centrally in their lives. They have a strong musical identity with a clear awareness of the need to have music as a means of support, communication and interaction with others, and to provide sustenance through associations with past events. The respondents' stories concerning strong historical backgrounds with key family role models illustrate the construction of a lifelong relationship with music even during times of challenge. A main point to note is that a sustained interaction with music for three of the couples has led to a continued engagement and enjoyment within their partnerships during the retirement years. It would therefore appear that music has the ability to forge positive joint identities within couple relationships. Even for the two less enthusiastic respondents, their partnership with, and support for their musical wives, creates a feeling of togetherness in participating in events. Whilst music does not have a central position in their world it still patterns their lives: a distinct pattern of enhancing a relationship through music by lending support.

A significant finding is the role of music as a necessity in life, metamorphosing into a friend or life companion. For some of the

respondents the ontological stance of music changes and it becomes a nurturer and a friend; their consciousness making it more real than music in its material form. Conscious thoughts and intentions can affect the physical world and here we see the respondents constructing and manipulating a representation of reality (Guez, 2010), in this case the reality of music and using it for positive effect as a companion. The participants' almost metaphysical approach to music appears to provide strong support and enrichment to their lives. The 18<sup>th</sup> century German philosopher Schopenhauer described music as being ontologically distant from reality and he reasoned that this accounted for music's ability to offer comfort and support, admittedly shared with all the arts but in a superior manner (Zöllner, 2011). The concept of music as a supportive companion is intertwined with the use of music as a therapeutic tool and this is further discussed in the next chapter; the unique qualities of music are further highlighted in section 8.4.

Music-evoked memory is found to act as an important catalyst for conjuring up past recollections both positive and negative. Reminiscences of people, places and events are profoundly highlighted by the participants when musical pieces or activities are autobiographically salient. This is an important factor in furthering the understanding of the significance of music along life's journey.

The importance of collectivity encompassing a group of like-minded individuals, all experiencing musical engagement provides a feeling of wellbeing and positivity. A key insight into membership of a social group shows the importance of a sense of belonging, illustrating the meaningfulness of musical activities within a collective environment. As shown in the work by Tekman and Hortacsu (2002), those with similar musical tastes rate each other as more ideal, and this is linked to Tajfel's (1978) Social Identity Theory (see section 2.2) and the concept of fitting in to a specific identity grouping. This chapter reinforces this feeling of belonging through the support of partner which progresses into retirement.

Another aspect of partnership interaction is illustrated through the participants' use of music to communicate with each other both verbally and non-verbally through the shared experience. All stories need communication and this is pertinent when narrating the lived experience through music. For some the interaction with music is highly positive but for others there are challenges along life's journey. In examining the effects of negative childhood experiences and lack of musical training this study shows how feelings of low self-esteem and confidence can persevere through the decades and into the retirement years. For some of the



respondents the perception of being unmusical is still currently prevalent in their thoughts irrespective of their partner's support.

My analysis highlights the importance of the musical lifespan story in the development of individual and joint musical identities, and points at its significance and contribution to feelings of health and wellbeing within marriage in retirement (this is further discussed in Chapter 8). The participants appear to be engaged in happy partnerships and despite the negative personal judgements concerning musical prowess from half of the participants, a key finding is that they are all keen to continue, and be supportive of, their shared musical activities with their spouses (the important qualities of music in relation to other activities are discussed in detail in section 9.1). The following chapter examines the participants' specific uses of music from a holistic perspective focussing in particular on the concepts of salvation and agency. Brief reference was made to these topics in this chapter when I explored the need for music as sustenance and the participants' desire to be part of a collective whole. The next chapter looks in detail at moments in the respondents' lives where their control was under threat and how they utilise music for self-fulfilment often through the use of the voice and lyrics.

## CHAPTER 7 MUSIC AS A THERAPEUTIC TOOL: SALVATION

### 7.1 Overview

As the previous chapter illustrated, a lifelong engagement with music defined the participants' musical identity; both individual identity and shared identity with their partners. This second analysis chapter has more of a focus on health and wellbeing and aims to explore the way participants interpret their engagement with music as a means of enhancement and reinforcement throughout the lifespan, giving further insights into the part this plays in their marital relationship in retirement.

The interplay between external forces, music and personal/couple development is an important factor in investigating the role of music in the quality of life in healthy older adults. In a review of studies based on this topic Coffman (2002) indicated the importance individuals place on the non-musical benefits of musical engagement which encompass physical, psychological and social enhancement. As mentioned in the previous chapter by several participants, music can be perceived as a provider of sustenance and nutrition in order to fulfil physical and psychological needs and it is noted that this provides an overlap the overarching theme of this current chapter. However it is impossible to

divorce the lifespan journey from the participants' interpretations of their uses of music as a means of support and enrichment and this section serves to continue and expand on this thread by considering the use of music at significant moments in the lives of the respondents. How this acts as a reinforcement and determinant to health and wellbeing, with ongoing reference to their marital partnerships is also considered.

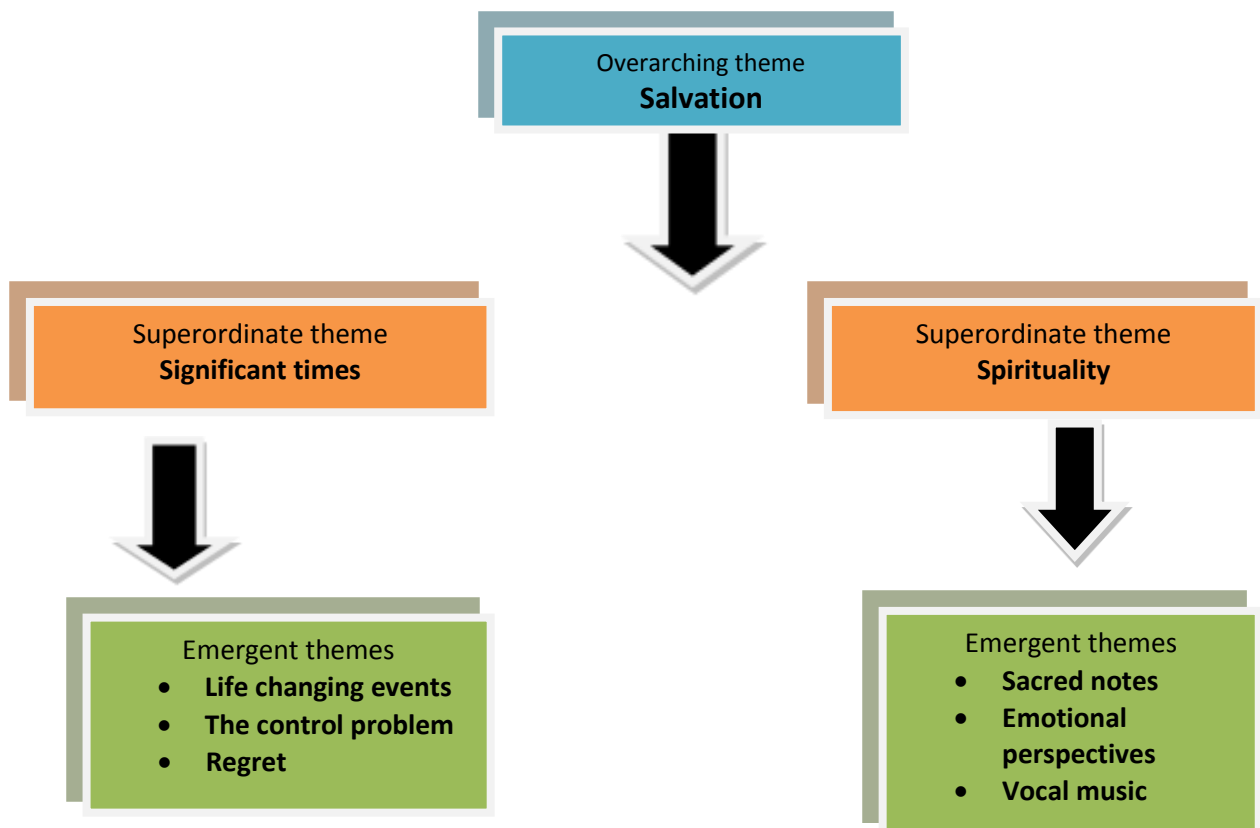
Salvation is a commonplace term used frequently in the study of theology and pertaining to the idealised notion of fulfilment in an afterlife. In more secular terms, it centres on the desire to be saved from something which is perceived to be negative. To this extent it may be seen as holistic in nature through its ability to deliver health and wellness to the entire human being. In this chapter music and salvation are seen to form a cohesive whole by meeting the needs of the participants and providing restorative powers to enhance feelings of wellbeing.

The thematic organisation of this chapter involves the subdivision of the overarching theme 'Salvation' into two superordinate themes, namely 'Significant times' and 'Spirituality' as illustrated in Figure 7.1. Each superordinate theme is discussed, with respective emergent themes, and focuses on the respondents' experiences of agency as a psychological phenomenon which is central to their control of thoughts and behaviours.

The first superordinate theme 'Significant times' is subdivided into three emergent themes: life changing events, the control problem and regret. This investigates the duality of agency, examining how the participants, through challenging situations, feelings of regret and periods of change, encounter potential loss of agency and subsequently utilise music to adopt courses of action which assist in self reconstruction.

The second of the superordinate themes illustrates two pertinent issues under the banner of 'Spirituality'. Firstly, participants experience spiritual moments when engaging with music whether in a religious setting or not. Secondly, they experience intense emotional responses to musical interaction which highlights their sense of appreciation and positive awareness of its intrinsic powers. The physical, psychological and emotional benefits from singing and through lyrics are then discussed, illustrating the use of the voice as a meaningful activity which proffers feelings of positivity and wellbeing. The following figure gives a diagrammatic outline of the chapter contents and illustrates how the themes are subdivided.

Figure 7.1 Overarching theme – Salvation



## 7.2 Significant times

Change is an integral part of the human day to day experience, but major situations occur that have a more profound effect on the lifestyle pattern. Picturing life in book form, chapters containing crisis, conflict, problems and transitions can all create periods of trauma and unrest, leaving the individual with many unanswered questions about the current situation and the future. During these times an apparent metaphorical energy is often present which determines transformational identity processes linked to the specific issues at hand. This can be referred to as

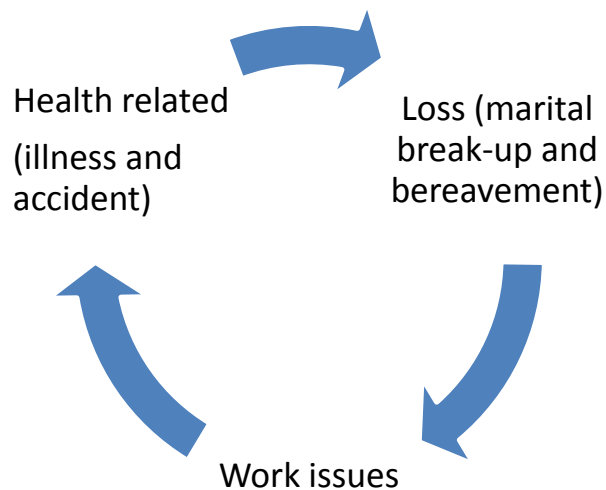
generativity which enables the creation of new ideas and images that facilitate a change, or transformation, in the manner of thought processes and lead to new decisions or actions (Bushe, 2013); in other words, viewing situations from a new perspective often as post traumatic growth.

This superordinate theme is titled 'Significant times' as it deals with decisive times or turning points in the participants' lives which define and signify who they are at a particular time and call for change in a situation. These significant moments often enforce a face to face encounter with the phenomenal world that invites the respondents to alter their lived experience. According to Caplan and Schooler (2007) part of our psychological reserves incorporate feelings of self-worth and personal ability which secure a sense of effectiveness during periods of stress and assist in coping efficiently. This section reflects on the various ways the participants manage these reserves through the use of music and how effective they are in progressing from periods of transition, instability or adversity to experiencing feelings of strength and harmony. Through their narratives the respondents highlight how they rebuild their changed and often damaged sense of identity and meaning. I begin by examining significant times which incorporate events that can be categorised as life altering and contributing to a change in the mode of living.

### 7.2.1 Life changing events

Change in the human condition is normal and shifts in relationships are commonplace largely through events linked with health, loss and work. The unpredictability of these life occurrences can represent sources of confusion and turmoil. The key to coping with these issues is finding ways of dealing with them productively and making the appropriate changes in lifestyle to facilitate feelings of strength and positivity. Figure 7.2 illustrates the key topic areas under consideration in this section. It can be speculated that there are some causal links between these areas, one example of which can be seen in the first quote by Jean in which illness brought on the work related issue of retirement.

**Figure 7.2 Key topic areas in emergent theme ‘life changing events’**



During their interviews most of the participants highlight periods in their lives where one or more events occurred which triggered a change or re-evaluation of lifestyle. Some of them have encountered health related issues, either personal or relating to a loved one, which have generated periods of anxiety and distress as illustrated in this quote from Jean.

*Jean: Um...I had I had to have spinal surgery and when I knew that I was going in for that and I knew I was clearing my desk in school eh.....I almost knew at that point that I wouldn't be back but I didn't want to think about that and then gradually as .....the first six months went past and the consultant said to me 'you're not going to be able to go back to work' .....and...I kept thinking oh no it'll be alright it'll get better no because you'll just undo all the good that's been done so you really can't go back to work I .....I didn't miss...what I missed when I had to stop I missed the company, I missed the children... I missed all the people that I was in contact with all the time and I missed the fun ...of all of that but I didn't miss the stress and I would say it took me about two years after I retired because it was almost a grieving process eh..... and at that point I ...I used listening to music an awful lot .....uh and then gradually getting... well it's not the end of the world I can still do this that and the next thing..... I took up going to the music classes at the university, because I thought that's something I know a little bit about but I'll get great pleasure out of it and I'll also have company and it'll extend my knowledge and all the rest of it.*

Jean describes the experience of facing a situation where two stress related events run concurrently; back surgery and forced retirement. Her health and career are intimately linked at this time with one having a major effect upon the other. As with any major medical procedure, spinal surgery is an immense stressor and can bring with it much pre and postoperative emotion. Jean's narrative demonstrates this emotion through a feeling of confusion, generated by the desire to return to work



conflicting with thoughts of potentially undoing the benefits of the surgery. Whilst feeling instinctively that she will not be able to resume teaching in the future she is clearly encountering a sense of denial by attempting to remove these negatives from her thought pattern. Jean expresses a high level of job satisfaction and repeatedly uses the word 'miss' to indicate a sense of loss at the lack of interaction with the school. She begins by stating that she 'didn't miss', but hastily pushes this to one side and proceeds to list the things she feels she has missed which clearly take precedence, before returning to comment on not missing the stresses of the job. This loss is not limited to the staff and pupils but also encompasses more abstract feelings of being denied fun and companionship.

Coming to terms with forced retirement elicits a need for a self-management strategy to counteract the feeling of grief. Her sense of loss may be rooted in the familiar evolutionary need to feel safe and secure and without this she turns to other means of support. In her case, music assists in bolstering positivity and maintaining her feelings of agency. After a couple of years grieving Jean turns to confrontive coping to address the loss directly and takes positive steps to enhance her life experience through listening to music. She is also seen to be proactive by directly engaging with the familiar by taking up music classes at the

university. She appears to feel comfortable with this decision as there are both cognitive and social benefits to be gained.

Salvation through music provides restorative intervention by functioning as a means of therapy and Jean perceives music to be a supportive life accompaniment which can be relied upon to provide pleasure. As shown in Chapter 6, music plays a key role in her life and this example highlights her reliance on it for support in a time of need, in the same way that she would rely on a friend. This also links back to the finding in the previous chapter that music can provide companionship and poses the suggestion that perhaps it represents a substitute for the loss of company from the workplace. It is possible that the memories of her former self prior to the surgery were evoked by listening to music and for this reason she begins to feel increased motivation to move forward with new experiences. Therefore music appears to assist her during a period of negativity and hardship.

From a different perspective, illness also entered Neil's life in recent times since retiring as his wife Sylvia suffered from cancer and is currently in remission. He begins his narration of this time by demonstrating a positive future perception of life in retirement and connects this with his own good health, which he attributes to luck through the use of the

metaphor 'touch wood'. The memory of Sylvia's illness is still very fresh in his mind and he utilises the word 'scare' to enhance his sensation of fearfulness about the situation. In fact this initial comment on the illness suggests that Neil prefers to think of it as a temporary setback rather than a long term episode. Scares tend to be more sudden and fleeting events associated with being frightened by something or someone threatening. In this instance the threat comes in the form of a potentially fatal disease. Neil then quickly follows on by giving a valid definition of the situation by stating that it was actually cancer rather than a 'scare'.

*Neil: .....I really looked forward to retirement ehm....touch wood I have been very healthy.....Sylvia\*\*\* had a cancer scare ehm.....well I mean she had cancer.....and that, we were not long through that.....and out the other end....ehm.....at that stage and you think 'Well, you know....life is finite'.....so...we want to enjoy it..... we don't, we don't go to a huge number of...of performances ehm but we do....we are able to go to anything that we do decide to go to.....so we're able to participate in that sense....ehm more ehm.....I think, and that, that, that is, that is very much as a couple.*

Neil's pushes the memory of his wife's illness to one side almost as an inconsequential event and he is eager to explain that despite being fairly recent it is now a thing of the past. He seems comforted by his own good health which is familiar to him, but the unfamiliarity he experiences through his wife's disease causes him psychological discomfort. Neil utilises the third person singular to suggest that he accompanied Sylvia through the trauma and they have successfully emerged from it as a couple demonstrating the continuing strength of their joint identity. One

may speculate that he visualises the experience as a journey through a dark tunnel with a beginning and an end from which to resurface with their joint identity intact. The consequent change in life as Neil knew it prior to the cancer, from being part of a couple enjoying good health to one with illness issues, appears to make Neil reappraise the limitations of the human lifespan describing it as 'finite'. It is interesting to note that he relishes the opportunity and freedom to make decisions as a couple and attend whatever musical events they choose; a stark contrast to the constraints inflicted by illness. The psychological distress and social restrictions of having an unwell partner has now been superseded by a sense of increased empowerment and the positivity of a clearer vision of the future in which music plays an important part.

On a personal note he must have experienced many challenges during Sylvia's illness related to his own psychological wellbeing. As her husband it can be surmised that he took some role as caregiver and will therefore have encountered many stressful factors pertaining to this. Neil chooses not to elaborate in detail on this time but as a result the dynamics of his life seem to have shifted and there is an increased emphasis on the value of enjoyment. The construction of a changed life post cancer can be seen later in Neil's narrative where he describes the act of retirement as 'joyful', and the opportunity to 'listen to more music' as a couple as

positive in life. As illustrated in section 6.2.1, music is very important to Neil and here we see him utilising it for support after this life changing event. The opportunity to sustain and further his engagement with music allows him to reconnect with the past, pre the cancer period, and identify with the familiar.

John's narrative alludes to the trauma which he experienced following a life-threatening car accident. As illustrated in the following two quotes, his attitude suggests that he views the incident as a critical event in his life which acted as a catalyst for him to review his life course. It is interesting to note how he succinctly deals with his recovery by simply saying 'I managed to survive' and then follows this with the words 'gave up'; however the giving up is not on life, but on his career. It seems that John was able to develop a cognitive strategy to counteract the trauma memory and thereby reconstitute himself and his world.

*John: ...I had a very bad car accident, I was nearly killed in a car crash when I was about 64 when I was coming out from (name of place) at a meeting once one night and a car went headlong straight in to the front of me but I managed to survive that and I gave up, I gave up my business side, I was sitting in a chair there! When this chap came in and said 'You've got to do something now different with your life' and that's how I got on to painting, you see when Chris\*\*\*\*\* came in and said 'will you do something different?' And once I started I couldn't stop, and just my imagination just flared you see?*

*John: ...the community centre which took 9 years, nearly 10 years of work and basically, what was in my mind was at that time was, I may as well say this to you was that, many a place of this size has got some sort of facility to enable people to congregate better and develop music and enjoy music and to appreciate music, there wasn't anything like that here.*

There appears to be a duality in John's survival in the form of physical survival and survival of self. Through a loss of agency (a theme further discussed in 7.2.2) from his accident John adopts a creative agency in order to move on positively in life as a painter. Evidently he perceives this time as an existentialist crisis where he feels the need to redefine himself through the decision he makes to leave his work in business and turn to art as a form of creativity. It is a way of being in the world that offers him a say in his own life choices. The presence of his colleague Chris is yet another key moment in this episode, as it is his questioning of John's future steps which pave the way for John to perceive himself in a new light. The use of the word 'flared' suggests an explosion of creativity which, once started, is deemed to have been overwhelming and relentless. This is later illustrated in John's narrative where this newly acquired creativity is strongly linked to his passion for music. He seems to have experienced a new found energy and describes himself as having 'so much, I found there was so much to do!'

This period of activity appears to centre on the challenge of bringing music to the village where he lives. John's involvement in the community

centre project may have been his way of coping by immersing himself in a venture which is artistically and musically creative. These modes of creativity allow John to function in an anxiety-neutral state through familiarity which suggests an added sense of purpose. From the above dialogue he conveys a sense of continuous interaction with his own passion for art and music and his altruistic desire to see others experiencing the same level of musical engagement and appreciation as he enjoys. One possible explanation for this is the collective musical engagement he has enjoyed with his wife throughout their marriage which he describes as 'a combined thing', and his perceived association between musical togetherness and fulfilment (see section 6.2.4). A joint musical identity with Jean and the familiarity of music therefore strengthen John's perceptions of security and support. Not only does music allow him to experience a 'sense of self' but he engages in a 'sense of us' with Jean and the community; this provides a source of empowerment which helps him to define who he is as an individual, a husband and a community leader.

Some of the respondents relate times when they suffered from a sense of loss, either through bereavement for a loved one or grief at the end of a marriage and describe how music plays a role in their re-evaluation of life.

The following excerpt illustrates clearly how Nick negotiates the meaning of music on a personal level at the end of his marriage.

*Nick: When I first separated from my wife and went to live on my own after having been married for 30 years I think music was quite a solace in a way uhm.....there were moments when you listen to the radio or.....the records, CDs that you've got uhm.....and I, sometimes I think I would've been described as being quite a comfort really.*

The emotional responses to the dissolution of a partnership are often paradoxical with a multitude of highly contrasting and conflicting sentiments. Initially Nick experiences a heightened sense of needing comfort, something which frequently occurs in loss related traumatic events. Here he experiences a dual aspect to his situation, that of solitary living and the lack of a life partner. The separation from his wife after a long partnership proffers a sense of negativity; possibly a degree of attachment still exists to his estranged wife whatever the state of the marriage. Nick's reaction to the loss indicates a level of distress and anxiety as he reveals his desire for comfort and support. His use of 'in a way' and 'really' suggests that he is being challenged to analyse his thoughts on the phenomenon in question and he is reticent in admitting the importance of music's role as a coping mechanism. The use of the word 'moments' implies a sense of mindfulness, of being in the present time, where Nick seeks the benefits of stress reduction and an increase in his state of positivity by absorbing music in a variety of ways. He broadens his musical interests through radio listening and enjoys the comfort of the



familial by playing known CDs and records which appear to proffer 'solace' and security. Interestingly two points arise which link back to Chapter 6 (section 6.2.1). Firstly Nick is one of the respondents who appears to have a more fragile musical identity (that is, music has not historically formed a central role in his life) which is currently developing through interaction with his second wife, Sally, and yet here he is seen to be actively seeking to engage with music through the radio and other listening devices in order to experience solace. Secondly, this also suggests the use of music for companionship and support brought on in this instance by living alone after the breakdown of his first marriage.

Jean outlines a significant chapter in her life when she experienced bereavement on two levels through parental health deterioration and subsequent death. Her father had a stroke and suffered from the rapid onset of dementia and within several weeks he was in hospital receiving twenty four hour care. Jean uses the analogy of a light bulb and dementia to describe his condition whereby 'it was like being in a house with all the lights on to hardly any lights on at all'. She comments that he was familiar with her voice but had no recognition response to her as his daughter and therefore the parent/child dimension was permanently damaged. This pre-morbid relationship would have been very stressful for

Jean with a low level of satisfaction and it appears that she needed to use music to maintain a degree of control over the situation.

*Jean: ...I think they realised that .....what I was giving my dad was beneficial to everybody else and of course then they would bring people in to play and sing and eventually ...eh...they got somebody in on a regular basis to do music therapy, so that, eh.....I don't know was like osmosis maybe (laughter).....eh but it went but I know that right up till the moment that dad died I had music on in his room eh...because it was a.... it was something that he,.... he always knew me and I don't mean that he knew that I was his daughter or anything he knew my voice, and he eh...eh...knew that I would always have nice music on for him or something like that.*

The examination of her response to this brings to the fore her clear perception of the role music plays in the provision of emotional regulation especially in times of stress. Her own strong musical identity is evident in her belief in the therapeutic effects of the music being played to her father during his illness. She is conscious of the care home's slow reaction to this and highlights their dawning awareness that others could also benefit from the experience. Her use of the term 'of course' suggests that she is scathing about their initial reluctance to consider her recommended psychoeducational approach through music listening for all the residents. Possibly Jean copes with the loss of her father's parental persona by turning to music for comfort, not only for her father but also for herself. Potentially music can be seen here as a bereavement intervention offering psychotherapeutic help. It is likely that Jean feels the need to respond to this life changing situation as an aid to coping and uses music as a stage from which to change her self-perception and her perception of her father.

Her position as a daughter still remains but is in an altered state and she now finds herself interacting with her father more in the role of caregiver. Jean's familiarity with music provides a secure comfort base from which to facilitate these changes in identity and a channel through which she can express her feelings of sadness and grief.

In an article discussing the link between Bartok's Concerto for Orchestra, written when the composer was suffering from leukaemia, and Kübler-Ross's theory about the dying, Parker (1989: 554) suggests that music can reinforce and clarify the connection between man's life and his music making. In adapting this to Jean's situation, it can be suggested that she took the opportunity through music to enhance her father's final days by offering him a music listening experience. Although his reactions were not necessarily outwardly obvious, nevertheless she felt she was able to contribute to his personal development until his life's course was finally resolved. In essence not only is music her form of self-defence against the onslaught of his mental illness but a source of support in a time of need and a means of gifting to a loved one.

I conclude the examination of this emergent theme by discussing the position of music in life changing events which relate to work situations. From the participants' narratives these largely correspond to changing

location and retirement. As with other emergent themes there is an overlap of thematic material, in this instance with information from Chapter 8 where I discuss retirement and ageing issues, and for that reason I will concentrate here principally on the subject of relocation. Many of the participants conceptualize their life course pathway through a structured framework of career choices for either themselves or their partner. For some, the opportunity to change jobs acts as a stimulus for residential migration. This can be clearly seen from Sylvia's narrative which focusses on both her husband Neil's occupation and her own position as a teacher and the impact of relocating home.

*Sylvia: ...we got married and we moved through to [name of region] and I got a job in [name of school] which wasn't so good because it was a new....a new town and a new school and the tradition wasn't there so you were battling all the time to try to get the children interested in something that they weren't familiar with.....but I joined [name of town] choral union and we both sang in [name of town] so....singing was still there.....and then from there we moved back to.....Neil\* got the job in [name of city] and we moved back to [name of town] and I got a job in [name of school].....just part time.....and ehm.....oh before that we moved to near [name of town] for a few years so I was singing in the [name of town] choral union at that time, then we moved back to [name of town], I kept [name of town] choir on and I think after that I joined the [name of orchestra] chorus.....and that was, that was super.*

Despite being a life changing experience offering a fresh start in a new environment with openings for new ventures, the anxiety of moving house has traditionally been described as one of the most stressful events that can occur in life. It is often deemed to be on a par with divorce and bereavement, as the construction of self is strongly associated with a

sense of home (Riemer, 2000). Sylvia's dialogue illustrates several moves which appear to act as transition stages in her husband's career and force her to rebuild aspects of her personal identity. The process of biographical disruption (Wolfenden & Grace, 2012) is evident here as a shared experience with her husband, as the upheaval she experiences seems to lead to a loss of confidence and a wavering of her self-identity. This causes her, at each point in her musical journey, to reconstruct her sense of self by securing employment as a music teacher, often with mixed success, and her adjustment to the new location appears to be crucial to her level of contentment. This is demonstrated in her position at a new school with no musical tradition and disaffected pupils. Interestingly Sylvia's solution to this problem is evident in her narrative of the places where she has lived which is explained through choirs; it would appear that she copes with these relocations by joining the local choral union as a means of defence against the challenges of her job. Membership of the choir, which she describes as 'super', and consequent social interaction seem to be of particular importance in the early stages of her marriage as mentioned above when she was experiencing a lack of fulfilment in her teaching post. Perhaps she requires a positive psychological outcome from her singing in order to compensate for the negativity she experiences from music within the school environment. It is quite plausible that Sylvia deliberately and successfully negotiates a musical path for herself through the upheaval of

residential change. The above dialogue also underscores an important point that Neil was also a member of the first mentioned choral union and this serves to suggest the presence of a positive musical joint identity within the marital partnership.

Geographical relocation is a significant life event and John's interview reveals several important home transfers. His narrative also alludes to the link between places he has lived and related associations with music, in his case, opera with a suggestion that he perceives music to be an adaption aid. In contrast to Sylvia he makes no comment about his level of contentment in his employment and appears to reflect only on his engagement with choral societies.

*John: I joined the (name of place) Grand Opera Society and I was a member there for something like 8 years and I participated in a whole series of operas like Nabucco, Faust, etcetera etcetera, a whole series of, particularly Verdi, Verdi operas were a bit thing for the (name of place) Grand at that time. Eh and after that I suppose because of work we got pulled away from the Central Belt and went away to live up North and to an extent, ehm, uhm, I lost track of a lot of music. But when we came back here to the Central Belt, back to (name of place), I always participated or went to any of the concerts that were held locally.*

It can be speculated that his compulsion to retain membership of opera societies and attend concerts provides a source of security and comfort to him, offering stability and support through familiarity. It can be suggested that opera as a musical context appears to elicit an emotional response in him which contributes to his sense of pleasure and fulfilment.

The stimuli of familiar vocal music enhance his feelings of wellbeing and act as a means of escape from the turmoil and upheaval of relocation. John interestingly refers to his move north as an act of being ‘pulled away’ which has connotations with reluctance. Perhaps he senses his unwillingness to migrate to a new location which clearly did not facilitate his continuing participation in music and therefore there is lack of reinforcement when times of help and salvation are required. . Interestingly he uses the first person plural when referring to being ‘pulled’ but reverts to ‘we’ when addressing the subject of music. It is clear from his interview that his musical identity is multifaceted: a joint musical identity with wife Jean centring on listening, an identity as a member of opera groups and an individual identity focussing on singing. On conflating the three facets all appear to be of equal importance and offer him a sense of security and strength. John uses the metaphor here to ‘lose track’ when referring to this period of musical inactivity which implies loss and deprivation, or the denial of something that is necessary to him. In this instance the thing lacking in his life is music and he compensates for this by reinstating the positive role of music in his life on returning to central Scotland.

Having discussed the impact of key events in the participants’ lives the next section considers the subject of music and agency control particularly

during times of crises and conflict and the subsequent impact on health and wellbeing.

### 7.2.2 The control problem

The concept of agency or control is a main entry point into viewing the participants' landscape of positivity, confidence, responsibility and personal identity. There is a large body of research which supports the theory of a clear relationship between a strong sense of identity and health and wellbeing (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Marmot, 2003). The following three extracts are taken from an extensive narrative by Lucy which draws attention to the challenges she faces in her relationship with her husband Graham who she describes as having a mild neurodevelopmental disorder.

*Lucy: ...he lives in his own little world.....and that's fine, that's fine I, I know what world he lives in uhm.....I know quite well that he is marginally on the Autistic spectrum and as such....I make the best use of that knowledge that I can to support him....and to make sure that.....I am there for him without expecting a huge amount in return.....and it is not a trial to do this, it is a pleasure.....uhm.....and because it's a good relationship.*

*Lucy ...every now and then I get a real surprise because he has actually something in him and it means that all these years of care and consideration and love...is actually bearing fruit and we're getting somewhere.*

*Lucy: .....and many things that may have caused us to.....nark a bit at the beginning are now sorting themselves out and indeed.....I don't think it's quite as much of a trial as before to come and...be with me uhm.....and there's always something....that.....he can find.....that engages his particular intellect.....like reading the Latin and finding mistakes.....so that, that is the key word of the relationship uhm...in not just music, but in other things as well, if I'm*



*interested in something and I want to take him along – he may not be interested in the same particular aspect of it, but invariably will find a related aspect that.....tickles his intellect.....and we join together and it works, and I think in many ways....uhm.....that's what's happening with music.*

To a large extent Lucy's world is shaped by her relatedness to Graham and because of his specific difficulties she has had to adapt in order to make sense of, and cope with, her situation. Her cognitive skills enable her to assimilate and process her intimate knowledge of his condition and interpret his reaction to events and emotions. She appears to deal with this stoically and within the context of Graham's limited offerings to her she is content to accept a lesser amount in return. Her words to 'come and ...be with me' refer to their joint engagement in musical activities and as shown in the previous chapter, their historical associations with music differ substantially with Lucy being the more musically active of the pair. She gives the impression of a desire to cultivate a shared and relational nature to their musical engagement and implies an ongoing psychological battle to create a joint identity. Her narrative expresses the need to connect with Graham in order to experience a coherent stability in their marriage. She invites music to provide the opportunity for moments of togetherness and utilises its powers to assist in the formation of a united identity.

A sense of confusion arises from her narrative suggesting that there is a temporal dimension to her interpretation of their relationship. Lucy

draws up a time frame whereby their relationship situation is now easier due to the years of supportive effort that she has freely offered her husband, however the use of the noun 'trial' implies ongoing testing circumstances. It is clear that music has provided a path for mutual engagement as it is multidimensional. As demonstrated in Chapter 6, music provides Lucy with sustenance; here we see her using it to gain control over relationship difficulties through the provision of related aspects to musical interaction such as reading the text in Latin. Lucy's awareness and inner knowledge of Graham's 'world' is not detailed but her meaning-making of it enables her to appeal to his intellect in an almost manipulative manner. Her narrative suggests that drawing on his intellectual abilities allows her to transform his reluctance to attend concerts into willingness, on the basis that she can provide an alternative element of engagement within the event. This sense of empowerment communicates a great deal about Lucy's approach to situational control by formulating a plan through music in order to gain agency and enhance the wellbeing of her marital relationship.

*Neil: ...as a couple.....strangely enough....one of the things that I mean obviously we talked, well not actually a lot but we did talk about....retirement and how we're going to....what the differences it would make and the opportunities and, and also the threat actually we were having a, well I was going to say an uneasy number but it's not, it's not a huge number, but an amazing proportion....of our.....married friends or friends that are in very long term partnerships.....actually came apart when they retired ehm.....and it's....I suppose one of the things that we, we were always aware of is that we didn't, we also....while retirement was going to give us more opportunity to*

*do things together and indeed it has and it's been lovely ehm and important, it's also given us an opportunity to do different things.....ehm apart.....ehm and Sylvia\*\*\* has taken up....quite a range of different things that, that do keep her very busy.....and productive...which she enjoys ehm....so in a way our.....ehm...apart from the things I've mentioned, our ehm engagement with music or music's engagement with us....in, in, in terms of ehm binding us as a couple has been a constant, because I think ehm.....I think at a very profound level, throughout our lives.*

The problem of control on entering retirement is highlighted here by Neil where he realizes the emotional context in which a total change in routine is associated with susceptibility for relationship damage. In this circumstance he and Sylvia actively engage in verbal communication about the implications of retirement and methods of negative situation avoidance. There appears to be an initial preoccupation with his marital state rather than the practicalities of retirement and through the use of the term 'threat' there is the implication that the relationship could deteriorate. Observing failed marriages at this stage serve to focus Neil's attention on the fragility of retirement adjustment and how this can be overcome through positive engagement in meaningful activities, both individually and together. This significant adjustment forces Neil to reassess the quality of his marital relationship and to respond to the new opportunities on offer to them both. This suggests his personal reflection on the togetherness versus personal identity issue.

Academic research supports the theory that once early routine adjustments have been made, marital quality returns to its pre-retirement levels (Miller & Yorgason, 2009). Neil's deep-rooted associations with music throughout the lifespan stand firm during retirement and facilitate a strong sense of agency, helping to set aside any potential fears concerning relationship problems. This underpins Neil's perceptions that through music there are greater opportunities to be in charge of joint and personal agency, both serving to enrich and enhance his marriage. There is a dichotomy in his explanation of musical interaction wherein he describes 'our engagement with music' versus 'music's engagement with us'. This suggests Neil's perceptions of their attempts as a couple to control the binding characteristics of music through understanding and involvement on one hand whilst anthropomorphising music as a controlling being which has agency through direct interaction with them.

### **7.2.3 Regret**

Making choices in life can vary from the trivial to the important and the wrong decision in a key area can be an intensely emotional experience, the memory of which sometimes remains with the individual for some considerable time. Regret is often defined as a feeling of sorrow about something sad or wrong and is frequently linked to an error of judgement, and a desire that a situation could have been different and more positive.

Most of the participants accounted for periods in their lives where either they, or someone known to them, made a decision which they felt to be wrong and which had an impact on their lives. There are many cognitive associations linked to these situations especially in retrospect the thoughts of how an outcome might have been very different had another, and more preferable decision been taken.

The principal source of musical regret amongst the participants is associated with the lack of opportunities to fulfil potential at a young age. The aspect of the regret in these instances is linked to decision making by parents who had a direct impact on the feelings of happiness and satisfaction of the respondents.

*Sally: Ehm.....there is within me quite a lot of disappointment that my musical abilities weren't sort of drawn out more when I was younger and that I didn't have the opportunity to learn a musical instrument other than the recorder ehm.....and that my parents didn't ehm.....appear to .....ehm.....acknowledge the fact that you know, I obviously had a love of music and some ability and ehm.....ehm...you know work on that and then perhaps encourage me to take it further ehm.....I, I think I remember actually ehm...when it came to choosing my O level subjects saying to my father 'I want to do music' and he wouldn't hear of it.....'Oh no, why would you want to do that?' 'Oh well I might like to be a music teacher' 'Oh no, no, no you can't you don't want to do that!' Ehm....in his eyes it wasn't a proper career path! (laughs) and I often think that if I was growing up today that it would be much, much more of an acceptable thing to choose that as your career ehm.....and what people want to do, what young people want to do now is much more, you know parents and teacher encourage them to follow that perhaps more so that something that they ought to do, but my Dad was a bit of a Victorian father (laughs) and what he said went you know and there wasn't really very much discussion*

*about what I really, really wanted to do and I think, I, I mean I I'm not saying I'm bitter and twisted about it, but there is this feeling of disappointment ehm.....that you know I wasn't....I often think I could have, I could have probably had, I could've been, maybe a singer in my own right, I may have been able to a, a solo singer or I may have been able to be a music teacher and you know, I just....so there is some regret there.*

The term 'within me', relating to her disappointment, is representative of Sally's deep rooted inner most feelings which have remained solidly intact. These aspects of regret are strongly linked to her goal in life which had been to make a career out of music and faced with parental opposition her life was forced to take a different course. The repetition of the word 'really' in connection with what she wanted to do with her life serve to emphasise her passion for music. This makes a stark contrast to the emphatic resistance to discussion which was in place within the home. Sally appears to find it incredulous that her parents did not acknowledge and encourage what she perceived to be her obvious musicality, although conversely reasons that she was a victim of the era in which she was born. Her suggestion that her father had Victorian parenting values paints a picture of an adult centred authoritarian parenting style, repressive in nature and devoid of the consideration of an offspring's emotional needs. Sally's personal tragedy in being refused access to music in its fullest sense is epitomised in the expression 'bitter and twisted'. She is eager to point out that she does not have these feelings but her denial almost confirms the latent anger that she felt in the past.

Sally references regret and disappointment in her narrative which are both responses to the negative consequences of her parents' decision and in the world of psychology are closely associated with counterfactual thinking (Zeelenberg et al, 1998). This form of mental processing is shown in her account by thoughts of what might have been had she been given the opportunity to explore her musicality and through perceptual illustrations of alternatives to these past events and decisions. Imaginary thoughts of herself possibly becoming a professional singer or music teacher are prevalent in her mind although there is uncertainty present through the use of 'could have' and 'may have been'. Despite the obvious assumptions that this type of thinking can be highly negative, Johnson and Sherman (1990) suggest that counterfactual thinking can also be a beneficial regulator of behaviour as it assists in the development of a coping mechanism through opening up possibilities for the future. In Sally's case this can be seen in her lifelong commitment to listening to music and singing in amateur choirs. In other words, rather than being defeated by her parents' decision she challenged it and partially satisfied her deeply meaningful longing for musical engagement by joining vocal societies. This strategy for minimising her distress and coping with regret has eased her feelings of discomfort. Later in her narrative she admits that despite entering her second marriage to Nick having different musical interests, he has become increasingly more enthusiastic about

her love of choral music and enhances her musical engagement through actively supporting her when she performs. This suggests that her feelings of regret and disappointment emanating from childhood have been tempered by a supportive husband and this contributes to her feelings of wellbeing. Verbal interaction with Nick concerning her love of music and non-verbal communication with him through joint musical engagement is a positive indication of an in-house coping mechanism to alleviate the psychological pain incurred during childhood.

John expresses a similar story and defines his choice of career as a key regret in his life. Unlike Sally whose musical abilities were not explored in childhood, John's musical interaction began at a young age and his promise as a talented young singer was evident.

*John: So all in all I've a very, very interesting background in music all the way through my life. And my one regret, em, is that perhaps, and there's no question about the perhaps at all, I should've concentrated more on my singing. When I left school the school wanted me to go to the Royal Academy in London to train as a professional tenor because I'd taken part in the operas at the, at the solo parts in the operas. And em, my father put his foot down and said 'No you've got to get a career first' and em, so I didn't take the opportunity and perhaps he was right and perhaps he was wrong and I don't think I was as good as, people claimed I was as good as Kenneth McKellar, but eh, it was a big, big chance to take and to be a really good singer making money out of it you've got to be extremely good.*

There seems to be an extra level of conflict here between John and the school against his father whose perception of music was as an amateur outlet rather than a professional career. John's father appears to fulfil the



traditional parenting notion that the music industry is an unknown quantity, offering insecurity and poor monetary rewards, in other words it is not a true career path. John seems uncertain about his response to his father's demands. On one hand he is confident that he had a distinct talent as a young tenor and that he clearly had the ability to proceed further in the music industry. Conversely he is unsure exactly how talented he actually was and this moderates his level of regret as he questions the correctness of his father's decision. His dialogue is one of confusion, stating that there is 'no question' he should have concentrated on his vocal talent whilst simultaneously querying the parental decree. John perceives himself to be talented to a certain degree, as someone who achieved a high level of vocal expertise as seen in his solo operatic roles and encouragement from the school to train professionally. This reveals a strong musical identity which was on the cusp of further development but ultimately denied that opportunity. The phrase 'my father put his foot down' seems to suggest an emphatic, non-negotiable decision leaving John unable to share his fear of losing a once in a lifetime opportunity. This created difficulties for him in accepting a different career path and caused him to redefine himself. John's search for self-identity demands knowledge of self and there is a feeling of struggle with this in his narrative, a frequent quest to find a musical definition for his sense of being. Much of his inquiry and questioning has been alleviated through

his second marriage to Jean whose comparable passion for music has provided him with a strong partnership musical identity. He describes their joint engagement with music to be the 'bedrock of the relationship' and this appears to give him a strong sense of self-fulfilment and wellbeing in his retirement years. Through this social reconstruction John has been able to substantially reduce his feelings of regret. Further discussion on the benefits of a joint musical identity is found in Chapter 8.

### **7.3 Spirituality**

Having a relationship based on a profound level of mental or emotional communion with music was a topic raised by all of the participants. Their narratives illustrate a dimension free from materialism and a desire to seek something more reflective and thoughtful through musical participation. As outlined in section 2.3 spirituality is a difficult term to define and can refer to a relationship with a divine being or with fellow humans which helps to achieve a personal sense of purpose in life (MacKinley, 2001). Spirituality is frequently, although not exclusively, concerned with religious engagement and this superordinate theme addresses musical narratives that express emotions relating to uplifting personal experiences, and the spiritual rather than physical aspects of human nature. The section reflects on the manner in which the participants relate the meaning of religion in their lives and their

appreciation of the beauty of music with its therapeutic powers through emotional outpourings and the holistic benefits of singing.

### **7.3.1 Sacred notes**

Emotions are fundamental to individual social interaction and those emanating from musical participation can provide a spiritual experience which is possibly a reason why religious practices frequently include music (Koelsch and Stegemann, 2012). In his book 'Theology and the Arts' Viladesau (2000) discusses the relationship between theology and aesthetics, exploring what it is in music that makes it such an appropriate vehicle for religious expression. He states that music is both emotional and intellectual and in essence is also spiritual as that it carries sacred texts, setting it apart from the usual spoken form of communication. This spiritual element can provide a rich aesthetic experience, offering the individual a feeling of working towards something which surpasses the present moment.

For many individuals, parental religious transmission such as church attendance, play an important part in their early introduction to music through hymn singing and sacred choral music (Pitts, 2012). Church music appears to have a significant role in the lives of several of the participants and an example of this is found in the following extracts, in

which Sylvia expresses the meaningfulness of music when linked with a profound religious faith.

*Sylvia: I've always ehm....attended church and I've always been a committed Christian and I think.....being able to....involve music and my faith is very important because it's a way of expressing your faith...you know through music and especially in [name of choir] where music is so much part of the service, it takes up a great deal of the service ehm it's just a privilege to be part of that you know when it, and it means so much so.....I think that's probably....what music means to me.*

*Sylvia: I realise that....it's very important in our lives....because we go out on a...on a Friday now to practices we, we...and Sunday morning, spending Sunday morning all you know, always together at the service.....now if we didn't...we didn't have that ehm...I think a lot of the time we would be...we'd be off doing things separately...and whether that would have an impact on our marriage I don't know....who can tell? (laughs)*

The continuity of having a religious faith and attending church regularly is emphasised by the word 'always' and further strengthened by the term 'committed'. Commitment is often used to define an emotional attachment between a couple and here it is presented as a connection between Sylvia and God which is intrinsically enhanced and reinforced through musical engagement. Clearly Sylvia's religious faith is highly personal and experiential and she perceives church music to be a tool through which she can express her devotion as a Christian. The perception that joining in worship through music provides Sylvia with a feeling of honour that she has been granted a special benefit which pervades her whole being: body, mind and spirit. In her experience, proximal religious events such as regular worshipping practices are fundamentally structured around

sacred music and she views this as significant to her personal relationship with music.

Music is special in that it offers a multi-dimensional approach to religion through the opportunity to engage with others in worship by singing and also to provide an alternative process for praising God through periods of inner reflection whilst listening (Joseph, 2014). The transcendental nature of music, like religion, allows it to rise above worldly things and facilitates the opportunity for Sylvia to enter into the spirit of the music. Its presence in the worshipping process appears to assist her in finding an inner meaning to her life and she seems to use it as a source of support. She utilises music to enhance her Christian faith and develop spiritually and this in turn assists her sense of self-expression and restores her identity through communication with others. Essentially she is able to rekindle an association with herself and with those around her.

Couples with devout religious faith can access resources which assist in supporting their commitment to each other and in coping with the challenges of life (Goodman et al, 2013; Marks, 2005). This, coupled with evidence that music can exist as a positive element in the formulation of close, intimate relationships (DeNora, 2000) would suggest that the combination of a devote religious faith and a passionate engagement with

music can act as ingredients towards the formation of a healthy marriage. As shown in Sylvia's narrative she and her husband, Neil are regular churchgoers and actively participate in church musical worship and this would indicate that their relationship is constantly being developed both spiritually and emotionally. In referring to the title of this thesis, 'Those who sing together, stay together', Sylvia's spiritual experiences are seen to be heightened by music. This, along with her joint identity with Neil are crucial in determining her approach to life and appear to suggest a close togetherness with God and her husband which impacts on her marital happiness. Despite querying the result of a hypothetical situation where they are separately engaged in different activities, she appears to experience a connection with something larger than herself and this directs her to sense the importance of mutual engagement within the marriage.

Graham's references to his faith in connection with music occur at frequent intervals during his narrative and clearly there is a close affinity between these two component parts of his spiritual experience as they demonstrate his close personal relationship with God. He mentions his appreciation of hymn singing on many occasions and the enjoyment he derives from classical music concerts regularly held in his church on a Sunday. He appears to view religious musical engagement as a positive

process which engenders feelings of positivity and wellbeing. This is in line with findings by Krause and Hayward (2014) who state that religious musical engagement in later life is clearly linked to positive self-perceptions of health and clearer visions of future selves.

*Graham: I enjoy singing hymns in church ehm and that's I suppose that's partly social....a social thing ehm.....but it's also ehm....a spiritual thing in as much as you feel you're.....you've got some kind of communication with God through singing.*

*Graham: Ehm....I suppose it, it ehm.....(sighs).....it does it for me....I feel some, something inside me which has some kind of.....sense.....I'm not very good at describing these things ehm.....I'm probably not the kind of person who is very much in touch with feelings anyway, but there's some kind of feeling of ehm.....happiness, communion with the Almighty....call it what you will and if.....ehm.....just touches me at a deep level, I think that's the only way I, I can describe it.*

Graham struggles to express his thoughts lucidly however there is a sense of deep meaningfulness in his narrative. His account implies a self-regulation of emotions through the social situation of engaging with others in singing. The vocalisation of hymns brings joy to him but the experience is not finalised at this point as there is a further dimension. The essence of his religious singing facilitates the experience of a supreme divinity making music a sound embodiment of his world. This dyadic experience suggests a personal sensation of communing with God and with others. This intrinsic feeling is deep-rooted and focusses on an experience which is sensed within him. His struggle to describe the characteristics of this sensation result in a slightly broken and hesitant

dialogue, however he rests upon the word 'happiness' and links this to his relationship with 'the Almighty'. It is interesting to note that sacred music has the ability to deeply touch him in his everyday life and is a reflection of who he is as an individual. Later in his dialogue he describes attending church with his wife Lucy who sings in the choir and he repeats his feelings of being 'touched' by some of the sacred music he experiences there. Given the number of times religious music is mentioned in his narrative, this appears to be a key aspect in Graham's overall feeling of wellbeing which in turn suggests it is an important component in the health of his marriage.

### **7.3.2 Emotional perspectives**

This emergent theme discusses emotional experiences from a holistic and therapeutic perspective. All of the participant narratives contain rich data of emotion related experiences, as musical engagement is a highly emotional encounter. With much research existing that discusses the implicit effects of music and emotion (MacDonald, Kreutz & Mitchell, 2012; Saarikallio 2011), this section of the thesis aims to uncover further insights into the role of this emotion within the marital union in retirement. The following quotes by Neil comment on his personal feelings about the role of music within his life and how these link with his wife Sylvia.



*Neil: Music has been a...a...ehm...a great joy to us both...*

*Neil: I think through music you get a huge amount of...emotional nourishment.....and.....through that, through that link with, with music, your emotional nourishment with music, you are nourished and fed...ehm.....from a source other than your partner.....ehm.....so you, you're not.....ehm.....you're not always.....seeking this nourishment from your partner ehm you can.....you can at least to a very limited extent.....be self-sustaining in that, in that, in that kind of way.*

These extracts show the joy that music brings to Neil's life and he positions himself as someone who is capable of regulating the sustenance he derives from music. He views music as a powerful source from which he can maximise his need for nourishment almost as an alternative to the support obtained from his wife. It can be observed that he has a balanced relationship between both sources and is able to articulate his need for the provision of this emotional maintenance. He describes music as 'fundamental and core to us' and it is this cohesive ingredient in the marriage which provides a continuing source of emotional positivity and benefit in times of need. However whilst recognising that music is a supplier of immense happiness within his marriage he appears to be hesitant in relying on this mutual engagement as the only means of obtaining emotional nutrition, and admits to feeling the need to be in part, emotionally self-sufficient. This reveals Neil's inner strength through the realisation that a total reliance for emotional support from another person can be enhanced through an additional source, in this case music, and it produces a strong feeling of security in his relationship with

Sylvia at his stage in his life. This multi-layered approach to emotional regulation through a continuing reference to the uses of music in his life suggests Neil's strong commitment to music and to his marriage, facilitating freedom for personal and mutual development during the third age.

Many of the participants recognise the concept of using music for emotional support and in the next extract Jean talks about her actions, in reference to her husband John rather than directly for her own personal needs.

*Jean: I think too, if not so much nowadays because J. doesn't get so stressed out but when he was doing all that work for the community centre he used to get quite stressed and eh I would say to him come on and we'll go and listen to something nice and relaxing and I knew that for the half hour or so that he would unwind and that was really good for him especially last thing at night it would be good for him and he could go to bed you know without things working through his brain.*

Early in John's retirement music is able to assist Jean in controlling his stress levels and provide a positive outcome through agency control. As a site for mutual engagement and a form of coping mechanism they are able to experience listening together as a positive activity which is highly meaningful in their lives. This is evidently a process that Jean feels is necessary in order to achieve equilibrium in John's moods and thereby create a level of harmony at certain times in the marriage. Her altruistic attitude and knowledge of appropriate music to suit his temperament is

highly beneficial in achieving the desired goal of maximising his positive mood state. The importance of music here is seen in the construction of their joint identity as they engage in music listening together to achieve a preferred outcome. Evidently the calming properties of music through the beauty and appreciation of sound are key to producing feelings of relaxation and oneness with the world. A more self-centred attitude from Jean's perspective can also be suggested in that a happy partner is always easier to interact with and therefore, for Jean, the regular relaxation sessions are a necessity at that time. She perceives music to be a tool whereby she can manage John's emotions and thoughts and this emotion regulation is seen as a link between their musical engagement and the ongoing wellbeing of their partnership. Having music as a shared activity is important to the natural rhythm of their relationship as a lived phenomenon and a joint musical participation is critical to their marital communication given its prominence in both of their lives.

From these two narratives it can be seen that considering music and emotion from a holistic stance is not necessarily concerned with an individual experience but can be viewed from a dyadic perspective. Response to musical engagement within marriage partnerships demonstrates how couples can share emotions and thus enhance and fortify their relationships. Retirement is a stage in life where couples

have the opportunity to increase their time spent together and musical interaction continues to figure strongly in their relationships with positive benefits.

From a spiritual perspective, emotions can have an uplifting quality and when utilised to create feelings of positivity they contribute to health and wellbeing. In contrast to the previous narratives Nick relates how music can be utilised as a means of emotional comfort as illustrated in the following extract.

*Nick: When I first separated from my wife and went to live on my own after having been married for 30 years I think music was quite a solace in a way uhm.....there were moments when you listen to the radio or.....the records, CDs that you've got uhm.....and I, sometimes I think I would've been described as being quite a comfort really.*

At a particular time in his life, in the absence of a partner, Nick focusses on music for support and to fulfil a need. As discussed in Chapter 6, he does not have a lifelong association with music and yet he turns to it to provide emotional support. He is somewhat hesitant in his narrative and questions the meaning of his feelings through 'in a way', 'sometimes I think' and 'quite a comfort really'. This gives the impression that he is not used to examining his feelings about the meaning of music at key times and when challenged on the subject freely reveals that music played a significant role in his recovery. Interestingly, now in his retirement years, Nick continues to utilise music for emotional engagement and states later

in his narrative that he listens ‘to it on an emotional level’ and there ‘have been occasions when emotionally it’s really sort of tugged at the heart strings and brought tears’. These poignant words illustrate how music adds an extra dimension to his existence and whilst on the surface he seems reluctant to fully admit to the impact it has on his life, he freely and willingly gives of his time to support his wife Sally in her choral activities. Thus Nick succeeds in presenting the impact of music as an enricher of the marital experience through the enhancement of togetherness and wellbeing with his partner. This feeling of positivity and joint identity was prevalent in most of the respondents’ narratives, in particular in association with vocal music and this is further discussed in the next section.

### **7.3.3 Vocal music**

The participants individually identify with music and emotion in highly personal ways however one topic that arises on many occasions during the interviews is the importance of singing and lyrics. Singing is well known to be a form of communication and social interaction which can produce feelings of happiness and wellbeing (Clift & Hancox, 2001; Davidson & Emberly, 2012). Shared singing experiences create a bond which enhances relationships (Stacey, Brittain & Kerr, 2002) and it is this enrichment that connects people together and augments feelings of social

wellbeing. It is apparent that singing, as a physical activity or as a listening process, forms an important and integral part of the couple relationship in retirement. Interestingly all of the participants refer to their interaction as a couple with vocal music, either in a listening capacity in the home, at church and as regular concert goers, or as performers in choirs. It is clear from the following two comments that singing helps to underpin feelings of positivity and create a sense of happiness.

*Eileen: It's always been sort of part of me somewhere along the line and I've always just just enjoyed uh.....there's sort of ....it's an ex ...extra expression I suppose of um...how I um.....how I feel really...I think...it's a lift, for me .....singing is a...something that I've always enjoyed.....it's really it's really nice that we're both in the choir I think it's uh...something that we're doing together.*

Eileen regularly sings in the church choir with her husband Ewan and their shared engagement with vocal music is clearly a positive in their lives together. She emphasises that singing has historically always been part of her life and in essence is therefore part of her. This interconnectedness with her voice forms a nucleus around which much of her musical engagement is centred. Vocalising clearly provides her with feelings of excitement and arousal and appears to have an impact on the way she thinks, feels and behaves. Singing is therefore an intrinsic part of her character and also enhances her marital relationship.

*Sylvia: ...it's the social...part of the thing ehm.....but also just making music...with your voice and hearing....and singing in harmony and hearing the parts coming together, it's*

*just exhilarating...you know you, you just get so much out of the music by participating like that I think.....we're both very fond of, of early music...Bach is just wonderful....and the big, big choral pieces we both enjoy singing in.*

Sylvia also regards singing as part of her identity both individually and with her husband and she presents this in social and emotional dimensions. Singing is highly physical and this embodied musical activity assists in giving meaning to the music in her life, enhanced by interaction with others.

There is a perception of the cohesiveness between varieties of different choral genres, from Baroque to the larger scale works, all of which serve to provide Sylvia with feelings of euphoria and uplift. Her use of the term 'you get so much' refers to the fundamentally enriching properties of music which can be traced back through her life journey as outlined in Chapter 6.

Communal interaction through vocal music allows these respondents to take control of their lives, affording greater personal agency. There is a clear freedom of choice visible in these extracts ranging from active to passive vocal engagement and preferred genres. In contrast to youth culture where young people align themselves to specific genres of music and current musical trends indicating the crucial role of peer allegiance in the formation of self - identity (Tarrant, North & Hargreaves, 2002),

retirees are freed from these constraints and able to focus on personal and couple preference. Sylvia refers to the pleasure experienced in engagement with her husband in performing large choral works. Due to the intrinsic power of music and its fundamental ability to create deep emotional feelings, singing together as a couple develops an additional role within the marriage. Sylvia is united to Neil, not only in a personal way through marriage, but by singing. This is multidimensional as she is socially and emotionally joining with her husband through vocalisation, with other members of the choir and with the harmonic structure of the music. Sylvia expresses this union and her sheer joy of choral singing in a powerful way through the use of 'exhilarating' and it is the ubiquitous nature of music that is an important factor in determining levels of wellbeing and positivity in retirement and in relationships.

In reflecting on the importance of vocal music it is worthwhile to consider the lyrics as they are an important component separating this genre from all other musical forms. This investigation however does not seek to unravel the complex nature of lyrics, but as the importance of words was highlighted by several participants it is relevant to include some discussion at this juncture. The essential nature of lyrics is bound up in nostalgia, emotion, meaningfulness and beauty of sound, and is highly relevant to participant reactions. The subject of lyrical thematic material



is wide ranging and can therefore draw an extensive variety of responses. Whilst research has shown that a melody is more powerful in eliciting an emotional response than the lyrics (Ali & Peynircioğlu, 2006), the latter does clearly have an impact as demonstrated in this quote by Ewan.

*Ewan: So again it's important to live the words to me it's important to live the words with my music.*

Ewan demonstrates the need to give life to music through the words and he finds the relationship between the two to be intrinsically rewarding. The lyrics seem to offer him a strong personal significance which is highly important in facilitating the maximum positive effect. He places great importance on how the words and the melody lines interweave and connect with each other and it is this dyadic connection which elicits in him an emotional response.

Sally singles out the large scale choral works as highly relevant to her musical experience. She instinctively seems to reach out to the words to enhance the emotive process and increase the level of her emotional response. Her comments show how she constructs her own musical identity by negotiating the different components on offer and concludes that the combination of words and music produce the desired effect.

*Sally: .....certainly singing, especially some of the, you know the big works that you do in choral societies uhm.....that can be very moving....especially combining the music with the words.*

Graham admits to being very 'fussy' in his interaction with words and he clearly demands that not only is the tune of good quality, but the lyrics

must also be meaningful and significant. He is very clear in pronouncing that the standard of the lyrical content is a major factor in his level of enjoyment. This is a major factor in the process of self-definition and a significant priority in Graham's interaction with music.

*Graham: I suppose a good mix of words and music does things for me but ehm.....and words mean a lot to me, I'm quite.....meticulous stroke fussy stroke pedantic in my use of words ehm.....and if, if.....words are.....bound up with a good tune then as I say that does things for me.*

Unlike his wife Lucy, he admits in his dialogue that he does not always fully appreciate the musical content of works that they hear as a couple in attending concerts. Often he seeks out other component parts of the experience in order to facilitate interaction with the musical experience. Therefore for him, the value of the words in lyrical pieces can provide sufficient sustenance. If however, they are combined with 'a good tune' then the musical experience is elevated onto a much higher plane.

These three participants demonstrate how music and words can impact emotionally and facilitate the desired outcome in terms of positivity and wellbeing. Their comments show how the experience of linking words and music can be deeply personal and meaningful. There is a perceived demand to experience a feeling of identity through the meaning of the words and perhaps this is key to their sense of agency when they engage with vocal music. The choice of pieces with relevant and meaningful words seems to enhance the musical experience and evoke strong

emotions (see Krause, North & Hewitt, 2015 in section 2.2), contributing to a sense of individual and couple wellbeing. The intimate engagement with music and words appears to enrich the meaningful activity of vocalisation and contribute to the dynamic process of relationship development in retirement and thereby enhance feelings of health and wellbeing.

#### **7.4 Chapter conclusions**

This chapter serves to illustrate the uses of music as a therapeutic tool in times of need and how this results in a sense of unity within marital partnerships in the retirement years. The participants demonstrate the importance of musical engagement as a means of addressing and altering less desirable situations and this acts as a means of support and restoration. This form of salvation, frequently through engagement with the familiar, strengthens both individual and joint identities bringing joy and comfort.

It is significant to note that participants utilise music to reconstruct a sense of self when agency control becomes problematic, acting as psychotherapeutic assistance to re-establish positive feelings of health and wellbeing within the marital partnership. This suggests the

important role of music as a source of empowerment assisting in the definition of self and as a member of a partnership or community.

Retirement is a period of increased togetherness time and musical interaction assists in the maintenance of support and levels of happiness. Musical knowledge is linked to the participants' social and physical environments and this underpins feelings of joint positivity. Verbal communication and discussion following joint musical listening activities aids social reconstruction and for some of the participants it is the foundation of their relationship. The opportunity for mutual engagement can also alleviate the pain of unfulfilled musical aspirations during childhood. The meaningful qualities of music, especially when linked with a profound religious faith, can serve to heighten spiritual experiences which many find intensely emotional and uplifting.

Singing is an intrinsic part of the human character and therefore highly personal: joining with others in this activity can underpin feelings of joyfulness and fulfilment. A key point to mention is how participants particularly highlight vocalising in church which serves to connect one to God, to others and to a partner and this in turn has been shown to facilitate deep rooted healthy aspirations for the future.

Having discussed the lifelong role of music and its uses, the next chapter serves to draw together the findings thus far, and integrate them into a cohesive whole alongside information in the narratives concerning music within the marital relationships specifically in retirement. The resultant themes will serve to highlight the importance of music in the health and wellbeing of the partnerships and its function in visions of positive future selves.

## CHAPTER 8 PRESENT AND FUTURE SELVES

### 8.1 Overview

The previous two chapters analysed how music can contribute to a better understanding of people's identities and experiences through the lifespan and described how it assisted in the maintenance of wellbeing and health. This final empirical chapter serves to unify these findings and explore how music can elicit a sense of togetherness within retirement, both in the present moment and as part of a perception of future selves. Drawing on experiences of integration as a couple, focus is given to the joint musical journey leading to the here and now phenomenon of everyday musical encounters within the marital partnership, and taking a developmental perspective of its role towards positive ageing in the future.

It must be acknowledged at this stage that there is a possibility for music to be problematic in some relationships, although there has been scant academic research into this subject area. Miranda et al (2012) reveal that whilst music usually generates positive emotions some maladaptive listening patterns can evoke a negative response. There is a suggestion that this is more keenly associated with context, stimulus and reaction than preferential genres, however this is an area requiring further investigation. In a recent article published in *Psychology Today* (2014)

music therapy instructor at the Frost School of Music, the University of Miami, Sena Moore describes how music can create problems in some situations. She highlights a couple of key points relevant to this research: firstly how music has the ability to trigger powerful emotions of an unhappy past and secondly how listening to music which is not of a preferred genre can elicit a negative response. Whilst sad memories concerning some early childhood experiences were revealed, as highlighted in section 6.2.2, evidence from this current investigation shows positive experiences for the participants when referencing their marriages. Potential friction created if a couple do not share the same musical tastes or if one partner is more enthusiastic than the other about musical interaction is also absent from the participants' narratives. On the contrary as highlighted in section 8.2, disparities over musical preference are addressed positively driven by the desire to appreciate a partner's individual likes and dislikes and seek a compromise. This chapter therefore emphasises the positive effects of music in the field of relationship health and wellbeing.

The chapter is divided into two superordinate themes, 'Nurturing a joint identity' and 'Into the future'. It examines the sense of self as the participants interpret themselves as the subject of their own experience of the musical phenomenon and as the subject of half of a dyadic

relationship. The advantages of individual interviewing are apparent here whereby, whilst still acknowledging their role as part of a couple with a joint identity, each individual has the freedom to interpret their own unique perspectives, thoughts and meanings distinct from the shared couple mode.

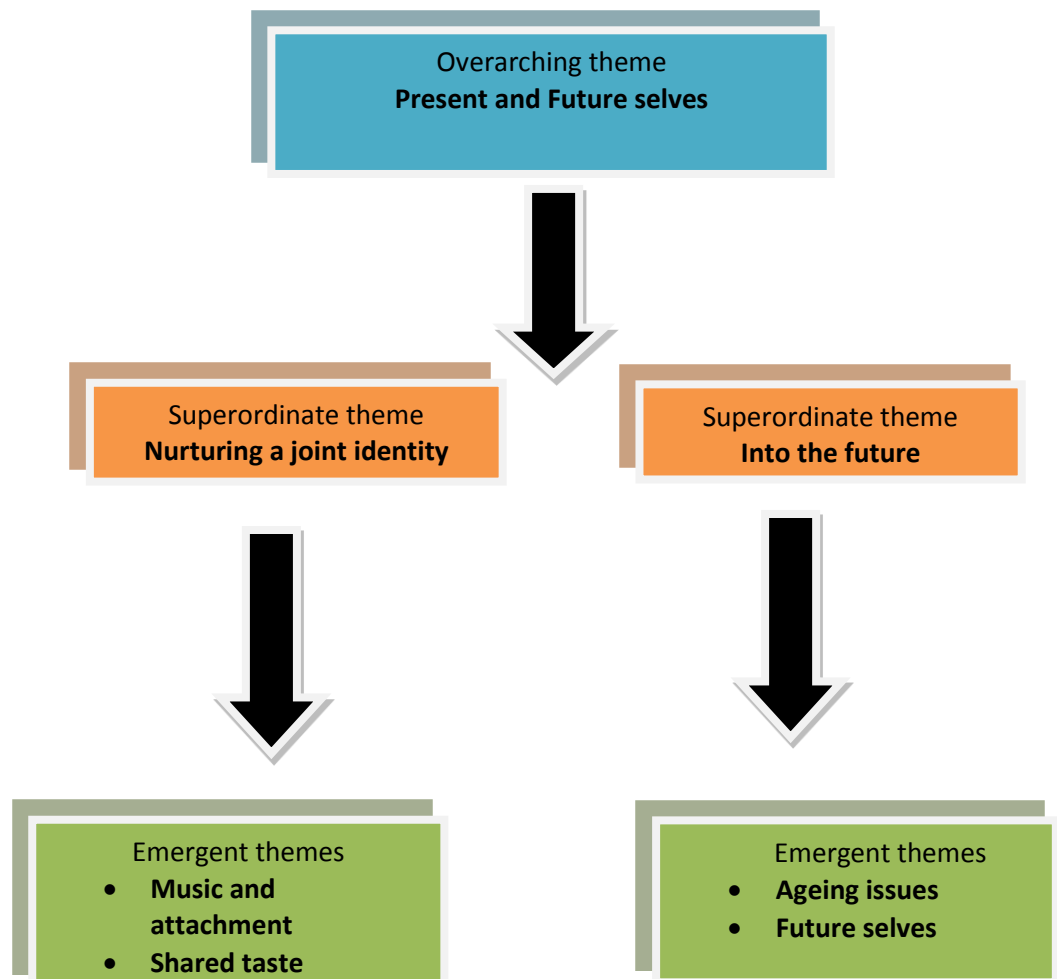
The initial theme seeks to explore the participants' current perspectives on the role of music within their marital union, focussing on their musical identities as retired couples. The second theme is concerned with future selves, reflecting on age related issues which can impact on musical interaction. It also considers how the respondents are able to determine a way forward as a partnership using music to assist in the process of successful and positive ageing.

The first of the superordinate themes, 'Nurturing a joint identity', considers identity from what could be described both as a sociological and relational perspective, in which the participants reflect on their relationship in society, not so much as unique individuals but in terms of their relations with their partners. The two emergent themes in this category explore why the musical experience is so intrinsically important in cultivating a close intimate relationship with a spouse and addresses the reasoning behind the interconnectedness of music within the marital



journey, whilst considering the role of shared musical taste. The second of the superordinate themes, 'Into the future' examines the perceived role of music in the lives of the couples as they progress through the retirement years. Problems of ageing are addressed alongside visions of future engagement with music as a couple. The thematic structure of this chapter is illustrated in the following figure 8.1.

**Figure 8.1 Overarching theme - Present and Future Selves**



## 8.2 Nurturing a joint identity

Retirement-age couples have to learn how to live with each other in a new context, and explore new frontiers in their relationship. This is a time of very serious consideration about the future and especially about their relations with their spouses. The move towards a more together lifestyle challenges them to address how they are going to integrate with each other now that there are potentially fewer outside demands on their time. Their main question is how can they can maintain a healthy positivity in life and develop their joint identity as a couple in terms of quality of time together rather than quantity of time. In other words it's a question of balance between protecting individual freedom whilst embracing greater togetherness. As discussed in Chapter 2, the study by Hays and Minichiello (2005) into the benefits of music in older adults, found that a greater involvement with music in retirement serves to redefine and strengthen a sense of identity and this in turn creates a platform for communication with spouses and friends. Taking this finding and focussing specifically on marital relationships this section highlights the salient merit of music in providing a resource for identity maintenance through dyadic attachment and musical choices.

## 8.2.1 Music and attachment

This superordinate theme examines why music is so important to the participants' marital relationships and what it can offer that is of special value and significance in retirement. As shown in Chapter 2 music has been found to enhance the quality of people's experiences and relationships for a multitude of reasons. Its intrinsic capacity for promoting social bonding, increasing feelings of positivity and wellness, and providing a vehicle for emotional expression and spiritual connection, all play a role in helping to understand why it is such a powerful art form. In referencing the work of Pasiali (2014) once more as shown in section 2.2, music has the qualities to construct or restore relationships and enhance positive partner interactions by enriching communication skills. In the following quote John reflects on the attributes of music through his joy of having a musical wife.

*John: We've done things together in that---we've never, there's never, never been a day in our marriage and our life together where we didn't enjoy music together. It's always been a combined thing, it's a very strange thing, but it's a natural thing but we just love it! And we just love discussing it and the opportunity to go there and listen to good conductors and good people.....it's a joy. It's a joy to know....that Jean\*\*\*\*\* is that way.....ehm.....and eh it, I didn't know when I met Jean\*\*\*\*\* at first that she had that but when, you know you learn about that in a person. It was a joy. It was a great joy to know that she was that and, and I'll you what the marvellous thing about that is – there's a consistency in our relationship, because it's a bedrock of the relationship. You see? It's a, ehm....a strong.....ehm....understanding.*

The source of connection between John and Jean can be seen through a structure of identity that is a dynamic social product of interaction with music. John is highly self-aware and clearly monitors the status of the continuing centrality of music in their lives as a means of maintaining and strengthening the relationship in their later years. Their joint identity has been created within a specific historical period, establishing a routine of daily musical engagement as illustrated by John's repetition of the word 'never'. His description is somewhat contradictory as he portrays their musical attachment to be both strange yet natural, which at first appearance seems rather confused. It is possible that he is questioning how their connection could be both normal on one hand and yet so remarkable on the other hand. There is a sense of disbelief that music has been able to bring him and his spouse together in such a significant way, allowing them to feel connected and giving strength of meaning to their marriage.

John's narrative is extremely descriptive and demonstrates how the emotional and aesthetically 'good' properties of music positively influence his relationship with Jean. He utilises the word 'joy' frequently and this implies that music gives them both fun and pleasure; John highlights this later in his narrative by stating, 'Yes, I think eh, that when we do things together like that we feel happier. We feel a bit happier, no question

about that at all'. From his comments it is clear that music is acting as a protector within the marriage, as it stimulates feelings of positivity (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi (2000) thereby making them feel safe and secure as a couple. He is clearly emphatic about his belief in the benefits of music in their marriage and how important it is in contributing to their mutual wellness. Together they are able to reap the benefits of musical engagement, especially by attending concerts and experiencing a sense of meaningfulness and empowerment. He stresses their mutual pleasure in hearing music performed to a high standard, and this clearly produces cognitive benefits by keeping them both mentally engaged through the opportunities to discuss and communicate. This in turn generates a sense of attachment and belonging to each other through shared experience.

John's level of joint interaction with Jean is shown to be continuous and as illustrated in the 2011 study by Sandstrom and Russo (see section 2.3), those who regularly seek immersion in music are most likely to experience an emotional response. This manifests itself in the form of joy and happiness for John and his wife and suggests a source of self-help through uniting them together to facilitate a sense of wellbeing. As stated previously he appears to feel eternally grateful that he has a partner with whom he can connect and it is this emotion of gratitude which continuously reminds him of how fortunate he is to be understood and to

be able to understand in return. This positive cycle of cooperation, creates an upward spiral of optimism and sense of fulfilment in the relationship.

The matching hypothesis of Walser et al (1966) concerning the link between long standing relationships and matched physical attractiveness can be seen here but in the format of matched personalities. This resonates with research carried out by Price and Vandenberg (1979) which studied married couples in Sweden and the USA and found similarities in several variables that included not only physical likenesses but also parallel social and behavioural patterns. John describes the fact that discovering Jean was also musically orientated, as a 'marvellous' revelation. He refers to this trait as 'that' several times as he seems to be struggling to fully describe the extent of the importance of this finding. John elaborates on the significance of this connection at another point in his narrative by admitting that if Jean 'was a lady who didn't really appreciate good music and wasn't musical.....I would have less, less respect for her'.

In sharing his life with a partner with similar values, John shows appraisal respect (Grover, 2014) by exhibiting a positive attitude towards his wife due to the features of her character which he deems to be positive, in this case her musicality. From this he appears to achieve a

sense of self-confidence and self-esteem from the fact that he has found a partner who can bring out these positives in his own character. He describes this as a 'sharing' experience and the bedrock or foundation of their marriage which has facilitated continuity into the retirement years.

It's interesting to consider Jean's current perspective on their relationship with music as shown in the following extract. Despite the fact that the couple were interviewed separately and their narratives are highly individualistic due to the idiographic nature of IPA, they are clearly in tune with each other's thoughts and views.

*Jean: ... you decide together, you go and you sit and you enjoy it together and afterwards you've got something .....that you've had in common an experience you've had in common that you can talk about okay...if it's perhaps just listening to some music at home even on the television ----I think if you have diverse interests then there's no meeting point....if you both share a love of something together then there's ..you're you're walking together on that line rather than.....I think I have always probably taken John for granted when it comes to music I think that's because I know that he enjoys a variety of of musical kinds the way I do ..um....I think I think I just I just take it for granted that I have somebody who's interested who um.. it's almost just like a love together.*

Jean's use of the word 'you' is clearly positioned as the subject in the second person plural as opposed to singular, therefore she is referencing both herself and her husband. She recounts her thoughts almost as a statement of fact; by following a certain procedure (deciding, going, sitting and enjoying) there will be a definitive outcome, namely a shared experience which is clearly a positive result. In their retirement Jean is

not content to drift into an uncommunicative partnership and desires satisfaction from the connectedness which music brings to them both. She exhibits an unwavering confidence that she and John are following the same path and this is clearly a necessary component in the relationship. This is an example of perceived togetherness (Tiikkainen, Heikkinein & Leskinen, 2004) wherein music acts as a determinant to health and wellbeing by satisfying Jean's wants and expectations from an emotional and social perspective.

Her attachment to John is strengthened by their mutual love of music; she feels a sense of security and closeness to him and there is an intimacy in their proximity as they 'walk together on that line'. She clearly considers that their interaction together in music listening on the most basic level in the home to be a means of expressing commitment to the marriage. In Jean's everyday world she takes John 'for granted' and thereby illustrates her assumption that he will always react in a typical way. This take 'for granted' prevalence is fundamental to their joint musical engagement and she relies on it to experience the depth and magnitude of their attachment. It can be assumed that considering the length of their relationship Jean and John are reliable in being receptive to each other's needs and therefore accurate in responding accordingly. Jean refers to sharing music as a joint 'love' and enjoys a symbiotic



relationship with her husband, because they simultaneously listen to music together and receive pleasure which is of mutual benefit.

In the following narrative Neil describes how his attachment to his wife has links with social integration centred on music.

*Neil: Ehm I think that.....because it, it, it creates for us an active, a very active outside life ehm.....we mix frequently ehm with very close friends but in slightly different contexts....ehm and that again is good for us as a, as a partnership.....it ehm, it, it brings us one of the highlights of things that we do like hearing our...my, my son play, like going to concerts, going to The Magic Flute the other week ehm....and so I mean these are, these are really good experiences for us ehm.....  
.....and all of that has, has played a very important part, but the other, the other level in it I think is ehm.....we'll go back to what is now becoming a kind of.....ehm.....a leitmotif or a, a theme of our conversation that ehm.....it's so fundamental to our relationship ehm....and the, and the people that we are.....is, is, is so shaped by.....by music in our lives and our musical heritage from our families lives....ehm.....that it has much more refined influence in our relationship and why.....why.....ehm....I just can't imagine us not being together ehm....it just is ehm....and music is directly and indirectly....ehm.....it's just so much of that that is ehm....all part and parcel of it.*

He emphasises that the experience of listening to their son performing brings positivity to them both over and above general mixing with their close circle of friends. Music allows Neil and his wife to communicate with each other without words and this form of communication is an experience which intensifies their relationship. Attending concerts and encountering the same music can change the state of their consciousness and result in intense feelings of joy and positivity which is a shared experience that Neil describes as 'good' and 'important'.

Continuing active engagement is vital in older age in order to reap significant healthy outcomes. For Neil and Sylvia, having music as a meaningful pursuit facilitates increased activity which is relevant in terms of physical wellness and social integration. Neil's comments indicate that music allows them to engage in a life out with the home environment and therefore suggests an increased theme of connection for themselves as a couple and with the outside world. He refers to the role of music in their lives as a leitmotiv which is an interesting analogy. In musical works, the leitmotif is a theme which recurs regularly and usually serves to enhance dramatic action and give cohesion to the piece. In this instance Neil appears to interpret this leitmotif as something which enables them as a couple to deal with life's situations. In essence it could be termed as a reason for being. It appears to facilitate the healthy development of their relationship as it moulds and shapes them into the couple that they are today. The position of music is perceived here to be highly dynamic and is strongly rooted in their social bonding with family members. This is in line with evidence from Chapter 6 which highlights the impact of parental role models in the human development cycle.

Reference to music providing a 'refined influence' implies that Neil appreciates the sophisticated relationship that music has with feelings of positivity and wellness. There is an implication that music is viewed as

something superior to other activities which can have a more intense impact on a relationship. Neil regards music to be a potent stimulus which evokes powerful feelings of togetherness to such an extent that the thought of separation from his wife is unimaginable. This is reinforced through the idiomatic phrase 'part and parcel' which implies that music is a necessity that can't be avoided. Hence they are bound to music and it formulates their couple identity. This is a powerful piece of narrative which gives strong evidence that a robust joint musical identity can be developed through the lifespan and assist in the maintenance of a happy, healthy and sound marriage.

Both John and Neil have partners with equally strong musical identities as their own however, as illustrated in Chapter 6, this is not the case for all of the respondents. Sally and Nick have both been married before and it is Sally who has experienced a lifelong engagement with music. Here she relates the 'pride' she feels in her personal musical achievements (see section 6.2.2) and by allowing her husband access to her 'world' she is empowered to influence the positioning of music in their relationship.

*Sally: I think ehm, I would probably.....be less enthusiastic about continuing to sing in a choir if he didn't want to come and hear the concerts ehm----I suppose part of it is...letting him into my world, that part of my world... ehm.....part of it is.....maybe....you know just feeling.....this feeling of pride 'Look what I've done' you know 'Come and, come and see what I've done as part of that group' ehm.....and I think that you know if you don't have somebody who fairly close to you who wants to come*

*and hear you do it then what's the point of you doing it? And I think it's quite important-----and it, it, it means that he can come and he---I usually get him to do front of house, which he does quite happily and it means that he meets people in the choir and so it becomes much more of a shared experience -----well the ehm the other main interest we share together is walking---- interestingly enough, walking probably takes the edge ehm.....over music..... ehm.....possibly because it's something that we do together properly, you know the whole activity is doing it together ehm.....and we're I suppose we're...we come to that activity on the same level.....ehm.....with the same amount of enthusiasm ehm.....so yes I, I think music would take second place (laughs) at this moment in time anyway.*

Whilst this study does not seek to claim that music is the one overriding positive activity in the participants' lives, it does attempt to analyse the unique importance of its existence within marital relationships and in particular what it can offer that is so profoundly special (see section 2.4). In Sally's marriage two important entities coexist, music and walking, and these appear to be empathetic to each other, each fulfilling a separate positive function but in entirely different ways. The pleasure derived from these two diverse activities enhances the partnership and is highly influential in maintaining the bonds in this pairing. This gives a unique perception of the close interpersonal dynamics in the relationship.

Whilst compatibility is essential in any relationship, perhaps in Sally's situation the interpretation of her partnership with Nick should not rest upon the analysis of their common interests but rather on 'are they interested in each other and how do they demonstrate this?' Clearly the

answer to the first part of this question is a positive one as Nick is prepared to enter Sally's musical world and the second response is shown in Nick's willingness to experience music with her but from a different perspective. As highlighted in Chapter 2, Nick enjoys music but has less passion for it than his wife as it has not played an overly significant part in his life's journey. In order to compromise he willingly attends her concerts regularly and assists in an administrative manner wherever possible. Their attachment to music is strong but they utilise it to bring themselves together in a highly personal way by adapting to their situation which fits with their individual needs and abilities. There is an emphasis on sharing in this narrative and this is an important component in any relationship as it is marker of compatibility and assists with the general flow of day to day living. Sally creates a sense of belonging for her husband through integration into her world of music and this gives purpose to her own music making. She carefully ensures that Nick's experience of her music is pleasurable and that he feels needed by assisting in front of house, that way she negotiates him skilfully into her world and ensures that he will be willing to repeat the process on future occasions. By allowing him access into her realm of music she is creating a very special place for him which is important in nurturing their attachment to each other.

A particularly relevant feature of Sally's narrative is her reference to approaching their walking hobby on the same level. This is to distinguish it from music where she has more ability than her husband. This illustrates the importance of compatibility which is grounded in the couple's individual and joint pasts and which are being realised in their future together. Presumably temporal changes in the dynamics of their relationship through retirement allow more flexibility with increased leisure time and whilst they are still fit and able they actively choose to position walking as their lead preference. Sally refers to their interaction with walking as something they do 'properly' which on first analysis implies that, in comparison, their integration with music is less satisfactory. However I think the accurate interpretation of this comment is that Sally regards walking to be a well co-ordinated recreational activity in which they enjoy equal involvement and where the balance of commitment is on a level plain. Therefore they experience a mutual degree of enthusiasm, enjoyment and affection. However due to the natural desire in marriage for closeness and interdependence Sally seeks to encourage Nick to develop his own interest in music by interacting with hers for their joint pleasure and satisfaction. The attachment through walking, and also through music, signals their joint acknowledgement of the strong bond between them. Sally's final comment 'at this moment in time anyway' implies that at some stage in the future

music may be the prominent leisure activity for them and possible reasons for this are discussed in section 8.3.1 particularly in relation to health issues. There is also a suggestion here that Sally might deliberately be choosing not to be fully empowered by following her own preferences. Through actively deciding to co-identify with her husband's current choice in order to nurture their marital attachment, she hopes that in the future they will both come to music 'on the same level'.

### **8.2.2 Shared taste**

The previous section discusses aspects of how and why couples form a joint attachment through active musical engagement and thereby further develop their joint identity. This theme is expanded here by analysing the importance of shared musical tastes (Tekman & Hortaçsu, 2002), not only focussing on composers, artists and genres but rather emphasizing specific types of shared musical activities in older age. Taking into account the lifespan history, memories and settings all play an important part in sharing music with a loved one in older age. Engaging with music provides a basis whereby individuals can identify with and connect to each other, and thereby create collective understandings of themselves and their partner. Commonalities of musical integration together allow individuals to adapt to the challenges of particular stages of life and

facilitate changes which address social, physical and psychological requirements.

Preference for different types of shared musical tastes and experiences is highly dynamic and heavily dependent on mood, needs and past history of choice. In the following extract Sylvia describes her love of music and attending opera performances in particular.

*Sylvia: What makes music special for us is...a personal thing it's because that music is associated with... a family thing or maybe a place that we've been where we've heard that music...ehm.....I mean I'd normally maybe mention going along to The Magic Flute the other, the other week there when The Scottish Opera were putting it on, that's a piece we've always been very fond of and we've been to so many different productions of it ehm.....that's a favourite piece----I just enjoy the music of it and the, and the story....Fidelio is another one we've very fond of – we've been to lots of productions of Fidelio.....it just appeals...I don't know if there's anything to do with the story but it certainly just the music appeals to us ehm.....or we go to something like that quite regularly whereas maybe some of the modern operas.....wouldn't appeal to us so much....although funny, funnily enough I don't know if Neil\* mentioned it but we did go....to James MacMillan's new opera and thoroughly enjoyed it...we were quite surprised----we went just out of curiosity and came away sort of saying "That was wonderful!"*

This response demonstrates the complexities of shared musical taste through a matched preference for opera and other genres which potentially may be associated with family members or a special setting (see section 6.2.2). It is evident that Sylvia subscribes to a music in which she and Neil have a personal association and their tastes for specific operas, in particular The Magic Flute and Fidelio, shows their main preference interest lies in intrinsically melodic music from in the Classical



period, with its appealing overtures and rich arias. There is a sentimental element present in her narrative as she refers to their joint fondness for *The Magic Flute* and she speaks on behalf of her husband in full knowledge that this is a shared preference. It suggests that they can revive memories of their life together by repeatedly attending concerts of favourite pieces and evoke bittersweet memories of days past, interlinking this with the present and an imagination for the future. From a temporal perspective, by focussing their attention on a singular piece of music they can be active in these three dimensions, eliciting differing experiences from each performance thereby enhancing cognition and feelings of emotional positivity. This is supported by research evidence from psychomusicologists who state that preferred music from an earlier period in life is retained throughout the lifespan and is highly significant in the later years (Cohen, 2002).

Opera is both an aural and a visual experience and the contextual factor combined with the performance factor appears to produce a mutual state of pleasure. As shown in Chapter 6 they are both keen amateur singers and it is therefore not surprising that their tastes are found in the vocal music domain. Although not influenced by peer pressure Sylvia exhibits a tendency to engage in the same category of music as listened to by a person close to her, namely her husband and this factor helps to establish them as a united entity through social bonding. In fact this particular

style of music is like a symbol which communicates their musical preferences and therefore their personality characteristics and ideals. This has been consistent for many years throughout their relationship and continues to find a way to emotionally touch them in their retirement.

Apart from their mutual taste in opera Sylvia clearly enjoys the act of physically going out to attend musical performances and concerts with Neil. There is an implication that they attend operas reasonably regularly and are prepared to experience repeat, albeit various, productions of the same operas which suggests that they are highly motivated and enthusiastic concert goers. Spending their leisure time together in this manner is important as it allows them to nurture their interpersonal interaction not only within their partnership but with members of the audience, the perceived value here being the integrated experience. Attending concerts with high expectations of the encounter through knowledge of a composer and/or actual pieces being performed can typically result in the generation of a shared satisfaction. Even when the music is less well known there is an expectancy of possible surprise in finding it to be 'wonderful' and increased musical knowledge of something new. This co-joint experimentation coupled with its cognitive challenges is illustrated by Sylvia in her approach to a new work by James MacMillan. Instead of being entrenched in known preferences and styles, she is

willing to increase her knowledge and sustain mental activity by attending a concert of this new piece. The satisfaction and sense of achievement coupled with feelings of excitement and pleasure in discovering its virtues are tangible. Sylvia's preference base is immediately enhanced through her willingness to be open to new and current ideas in older age. In her narrative she speaks for her husband too and she appears confident that he shares her thoughts and tastes, with the result that they experience intellectual stimulation and enhanced emotional and cognitive wellbeing. Music is thereby seen as a highly versatile facilitator of both physical and psychological experiences and creates a platform for mutual engagement in shared preferences.

As shown in Chapter 2 there is an increasing body of research evidence to support singing as an activity which has a range of health benefits. This particular musical activity is a shared engagement for several of the couples. In the following extract Eileen's encapsulates her thoughts on singing in the church choir with her husband Ewan.

*Eileen: Well...I think it's really it's really nice that we're both in the choir I think it's uh...something that we're doing together you know I mean....uh--- it is nice to know that your partner's um...enjoying doing the same thing as you I think um.....and....we can support one another as well you know I mean he's a bit more musical than I am um.... and he will encourage you know and say 'Well can the altos sound up' whatever and 'Good', you know sort of thing and vice versa it's a you know um... 'Sounded good' you know and it's good to encourage one another so that we've got sort of a mutual respect for one another in the singing or we'll tweak one another's tail*

*and say you know something funny but yeah it's good because it's a sort of encouragement as well for one another so yeah.*

This couple's preference for singing together reinforces their sense of agency as they consciously pursue an activity which is associated with positive consequences and for which they have an inner motivation. Despite Ewan's apparent greater knowledge of music, they both have a degree of ability which enables them to choose the musical direction they wish to take and thereby absorb the particular and numerous benefits of singing together. To an extent Ewan provides a source of authority reinforcement and this assists Eileen in nurturing her musical sense of self. The use of the word 'support' suggests an interdependence in their marital interrelation which leads to enhanced levels of satisfaction and positivity. Since they clearly engage in frequent interaction in their everyday life through music it is not surprising that they have the ability to influence each other. Supporting a spouse through musical engagement in order to accompany each other through life is a common thread in this investigation and it can be suggested that it acts as a coping mechanism for relationship maintenance through social bonding and emotional stimulation. Despite focussing on physical activity alone a study by Gellert et al (2011) found similar results, that social support in older adults was related positively to the intervention of a participating partner which suggests that doing things together in a shared preference domain positively enhances a joint identity and couple attachment. This is an

important factor in the study of marital interaction and is clearly shown here in Eileen's narrative.

Empirical studies in the world of social psychology illustrate that the phenomenology of respect incorporates equality based appreciation within social relationships throughout adulthood (Lang et al, 2013). Having an unconditional respect for an individual is a concept that is at the heart of teachings by moral philosophers such as Kant, who in his 1797 work the *Metaphysics of Morals* (Korsgaard, 2012) placed the emphasis on the basic recognition of the natural value and equality of humans. This equality can be seen in Eileen's account where she implies that she and Ewan have a mutual regard for each other's musicianship. It is interesting to note the use of the word 'respect' in considering how she constructs the meaning of singing in her life. Whilst illustrating Ewan's positive comments on her alto section of the choir she feels an increased sense of confidence and thereby illustrates the dynamic of mutual respect. It is an ongoing function of social interaction and of their marital harmony. Their shared taste in singing also leads to some humour where it is apparent that there is some interjection of teasing and amusement or tweaking 'one another's tail'. This illustrates that couples in older age, when motivated, can exhibit behavioural patterns traditionally associated with younger people.

Music thereby provides this partnership with the tools to enhance coupledness through fun, bonding, lifting the spirits and affection.

As indicated in section 8.1 there are instances where music has the potential to cause negativity within a relationship, such as individual differences in musical taste. It is interesting to note that in this current study the participants with different musical preferences appear to need to negotiate a middle ground where both partners are able to engage in each other's preferences. The following quote from Sally highlights this and further establishes the importance of mutual respect within the marital partnership. From her narrative it can be extrapolated that the conjoining of music and a willingness to embrace a partner's preferences produces positive results.

*Sally: ...he didn't really have very much interest in choral music and he tends to go for what I would call, ehm heavier music..... Rachmaninov, and that kind of thing, which uhm, I just found.....slightly ehm, initially too, too heavy. ....but it's, it's interesting actually because I think over time....he's becoming more interested in choral music, well he has to come to my concerts anyway! (laughs) But I've sort of had to listen to Mahler from time to time and thought 'Oh actually it's not that---not quite so bad after all!' (laughs) So I think we've, we've ehm....influenced each other in that, in that way.*

Mutually similar domains which are shared have been found to enhance the success of intimate relationships especially if they relate to essential issues (Uusiautti & Määttä, 2012), and this is supported by Sally's comments. Integration in non-choice genres has, over a period of time,

resulted in the development of mutual interests for her and her husband and the acceptance of novel musical categories. They both initiate action to enhance their joint experience of music through self-regulation by embracing each other's preferences. Sally appears to regard this process as a joy rather than a chore as her narrative contains laughter and some 'tongue in cheek' comments that she insists her husband attends her concerts and that her adoption of his musical style is actually surprisingly bearable. This attitude of compromise and respect further enhances both their joint musical identity and their sense of happiness.

This section serves to indicate that a joint identity in the present provides the foundation for marital health and wellbeing in the future. The second superordinate theme 'Into the future' expands on this theme and shows how the participants focus on their plans as a couple for the years to come. Reflections on age related health problems and how they perceive their use of music will impact on successful ageing are discussed in detail.

### **8.3 Into the future**

As couples enter the third age their existence is reshaped by a significant change in lifestyle with new challenges and goals. Research indicates that marital harmony levels in older age are on average found to be encouragingly high, with a positive correlation between marital

contentment and retirement satisfaction (Schwartz & Olds, 2000; Kupperbusch, Levenson & Ebling, 2003). Agreeing on activities and aspirations as a couple are key to communication at this time in order to ensure continued feelings of togetherness and compatibility in the context of successful ageing. In order to discuss the participants' ambitions and desires for the years ahead, this theme is divided into two emergent themes concerning ageing and the future. The study initially explores the participants' thoughts and fears over potential ailments which could affect their engagement with music, especially considering the fact that as our population ages the average number of people with one or more chronic diseases is also increasing (Stephens & Flick, 2010). Finally the investigation analysis steps forward in time by examining the respondents' dreams and hopes for their future marital interaction with music and its role in positive ageing.

### **8.3.1 Ageing issues**

As ageing is linked with a natural decline in cognitive powers and physical abilities it is important for retirees to fill the void left by the workplace and focus on rekindling old and developing new hobbies. In order to protect against mental deterioration or depression, and other age related illnesses retirees are recommended to take up challenging pastimes in order to keep their brains functioning in a healthy manner



(Baer et al, 2012). As discussed in Chapter 2 a plethora of research shows that music is a beneficial leisure pursuit, acting as an effective intervention in helping to achieve wellness and assisting in future selves by getting people to intensify their engagement in a variety of cognitive and physical activities, like singing and music listening. Although in many ways retirement can be an extremely positive stage of life it can also deliver harsh physical challenges which inhibit access to musical engagement. Hearing loss, immobility and mental diseases can all play their part in substantially affecting leisure time activities. As stated by Clarke, Dibben and Pitts (2010) the topic of music and health deterioration in the later years is an under researched area, possibly due to the sensitive nature of the subject. This study aims to address some of these issues and shed light on the relationship between maintaining musical faculties in later life, and health and wellbeing in marital partnerships.

The participants approach the question of age related health issues in two distinct ways. For some there is a fear of no longer being able to actively make music on a personal level and for others the concern centres on the inability to enjoy music from a more passive listening perspective. One common thread throughout the narratives is the consideration of health problems in old age from a personal stance,

interestingly with scant mention of coping with potential illnesses encountered by a spouse and no reference to the possibility of bereavement. There are a few possible reasons for this:

1. The idea of an ill partner or death is unsettling and therefore uncomfortable to discuss so there is an element of denial in the narratives
2. Nine out of the ten participants are aged between 60 and 70 and could be labelled as young third agers, therefore thoughts of illness and decrepitude do not appear to be foremost in their minds
3. Despite the participants being highly bound up in the security of coupledness the interviews were conducted individually hence the focus was mainly person centred

Consequently this particular section centres mainly on the individual rather than on the couples' dynamics. However, this is highly relevant to the dyadic partnership as health problems experienced by one partner will inevitably affect the other. Reference is made to feelings of sadness that certain faculties, such as vocal ability, will eventually become impaired, but there is a general feeling of optimism amongst the participants in the full knowledge that music can be enjoyed in other ways, and this will be discussed in detail in section 8.3.2.

Having the ability for continuing participation and active engagement in music is important to several of the participants who are keen singers, and in the following extract Sally expounds on her sadness at the thought of losing her singing voice.

*Sally: ...but you know I am realistic and I know that probably in the next few years eh.....my vocal chords are likely to.....start to show signs of ageing I guess and I, I, I just hope that if I don't realise it myself that somebody else will tell me! (laughs) Especially where I'm more exposed ehm.....I mean we have ladies of 80 in our choir and I think there are enough younger women probably to cover any of their.....ehm....their sort of erm degeneration in, in, in being able to sing well ehm.....but I, it, it is important to me because I think when I do have to stop that it will be ehm....it will be a great loss to me I think.*

After a lifetime of singing in choirs with a reliably stable voice Sally is aware that she may encounter obvious changes in the ability of her singing voice, termed presbyphonia, as her body ages. Her voice is an intrinsic part of who Sally perceives herself to be and facilitates positivity through emotional and social involvement with others in choral singing. Alongside this she is accompanied by her husband Nick at all her performances and this is a key factor in their mutual support for each other. She postulates that even if she is in denial about the vocal deterioration then others will point it out to her which in turn may affect her perception of the quality of her life. Singing gives her a sense of fulfilment and membership in choirs is a key part of her social life (see section 6.2.3). Social expectations of vocal ability seem to dominate her thoughts on this issue and she appears to be hampered by the opinions of

others concerning her singing, especially younger members of the choir. Presumably she is comparing her present self to her past self and realises that the benefits she has so far experienced from vocal activities will in time be denied to her. In other words, what is presently an advantage in her life could become an important 'loss'. She exhibits a sense of defeat in the knowledge that she will be deprived of her good singing voice which is something that she currently controls and which is so intrinsically powerful. She is explicitly describing a potential loss of agency as singing empowers her to experience a strong musical identity. The process of coping with the challenges of this type of age related health issue will no doubt have an impact on her marital relationship. The regular mutual engagement which Sally and Nick enjoy through her choral performances and his supportive backstage role will inevitably have to be shaped differently if she feels compelled to stop singing in choirs. Such challenges pose significant questions for couples as the years advance where relevant adjustments have to be made.

Ewan, who is a very keen and knowledgeable amateur conductor and choir master, is challenged by the interview question 'How do you feel about ageing and the role of music in your life?'

*Ewan: I honestly haven't thought about it.....uhm.....no, it's just....am I in denial? I don't know, I just haven't thought about it. I haven't thought about it at all.....despite the fact of what Eileen\*\* might say, I don't think my hearing is still too bad. At the moment I'm glad to say---- I would dislike the*

*isolation that I feel that---having being able to hear all through my life, then....I think perhaps the isolation it might bring, would frighten me--- I just think it's.....(sighs)...it's being cut off. I mean I don't have music on all the time, by any means, it's uh....as I say I do if I'm driving, or I have the radio on let's put it that way if I'm driving. Uhm.....I don't know, it, it would be, the isolation it would bring it's in its own way. I fear other things, I fear dementia more than I fear....uh....loss of hearing or--- I suppose with deafness, I mean the dog went deaf, bless her, you know. And I think she felt a little bit of...isolation. But as I say, no, it's more, probably more Alzheimer's or dementia that....that.....worries me. Not that there is a history of that in the family, but I've seen it in other people and it would be more that that would concern me, yeah.*

His narrative is somewhat confused as he appears to exhibit a sense of self-deception on one hand by stressing that he has never considered the implications of ageing on his musical life and on the other he gives a detailed breakdown of the things he fears most. This suggests that he is more aware of possible health issues in the future than he likes to admit. His tongue in cheek remark referencing what his wife might say, presumably referring to his lack of attention to listening to her at times, acts as a distractor from the subject and is suggestive of someone 'in denial', as he admits himself. In talking through his thoughts Ewan shows how insecure his life would become in the event of illness and his denial acts as a useful self - defence mechanism and helps him to cope with the possibility of such afflictions in order to survive. His rather unconvincing protestation that he hasn't thought about age and illness suggests that he is using an avoidance technique which is adaptive and often learnt from childhood, whereby humans attempt to avoid uncomfortable situations such as emotional or physical pain and even

fear. This form of denial through avoidance can potentially have a negative effect as it stems the processing of emotions which in turn heightens distress (Heru, 2013). Despite the sensitive nature of the topic addressing possible future problems for which he could seek help, would assist and prepare him in improving his life quality should and when the need arises.

Ewan appears currently absorbed in the comfort of his world which, as demonstrated throughout his narrative, incorporates his work with the church and local choirs also involving his wife Eileen, alongside his own private listening time. This particular extract has an overall feeling of fear especially of the unknown. Ewan states that he listens to music in the car but his key worries concern hearing loss and mental health deterioration. Interestingly he doesn't include physical diseases which would have a degenerative impact on the body and impair motor movement. This implies that he worries most about losing what he has of himself as a person. With hearing loss or presbycusis, isolating though they may be, he would still retain his identity and sense of self, whereas dementia and other age related mental health problems would progressively remove that from his persona. Possibly without conscious realisation Ewan is expressing his fear of losing his ability to engage with music in the most basic of ways, through sound awareness and cognition

(see section 3.4). Retaining cognitive lucidity and understanding his hearing is key to being able to communicate and socialise effectively and if this is impaired Ewan would struggle to continue in his leadership role as a choir leader and conductor. His relationship with Eileen would also suffer as the partnership would be impeded by the associated symptoms of his condition. Whilst Ewan does not specifically delve into these potential implications it can be surmised that his interpretation of 'isolation' includes such potential scenarios. The resulting loss of confidence and independence would mean his inability to cope with everyday life and the sense of separation from the world would be difficult for such a musically active individual.

As discussed in section 6.2.1, with specific reference to Neil and John, some of the respondents view music as a friend in life, here Ewan also appears to be engaging in the anthropomorphisation of music by regarding it as an accompaniment, for example listening to music in the car as he is driving. Deafness and mental health illnesses would deprive him of this travelling companion and his world would feel remote and detached. Ewan seeks comfort in his perception that he is not genetically predisposed to either affliction and this seems to help as a coping mechanism, although this is delicately balanced against his knowledge of these conditions in others, even his dog. He stresses that he has no

current hearing issue and that his family have not historically suffered from mental health problems. Therefore he clearly feels the need to state these facts in order to verbally dispel the myth that one day he might become afflicted and this is possibly an example of him reassuring himself in order to achieve a false sense of security.

Ewan is not alone in expressing a fear of hearing loss as Jean also reflects on this affliction with particular reference to music listening.

*Jean: I could listen to music all the time---I think it's just that's that's I mean just part of me..... ..heaven forbid if I become deaf .....a hearing loss that would be, that would be awful ...hearing loss where you can use a hearing aid's okay but if something was to happen where you were to you know lose most of your hearing I would find that very very difficult um.....I think that would be worse than, definitely worse than losing your eyesight uh... because then you're completely shut off.*

The message in this extract is very profound as she analyses the impact of presbycusis. Throughout Jean's entire narrative she demonstrates a strong identity with music and on being challenged to think about the consequences of ageing her foremost thought is linked with hearing. From one perspective she considers music to form an essential part of her being and yet from another stance she foresees how hearing loss could destroy this important part of her sense of self. Whilst she finished performing music practically some years previously, listening to music with John as a concertgoer and in the home is a significant part of her life and she seems to clearly predict the inner conflict she would experience if denied her



hearing faculty. She actively compares blindness and deafness and rapidly decides that the latter would be markedly worse as it would deny her the language of music which brings such pleasure and joy into her life. Being closed from the world and unable to communicate effectively with John and others would be extremely 'difficult' for Jean, as music is a major source of her emotional and cognitive activity. Despite rationalising that modern technology can assist with presbycusis to a certain extent she focuses how unpleasant her life would be, and the impact on her suggests that she would feel like a prisoner in solitary confinement with a reduced sense of identity and struggling to cope.

The accounts by Sally, Ewan and Jean are consistent with reports from the other respondents who share with them some element of apprehension about the future from a physical and mental health perspective. Despite the fears and awareness of the age related health problems ahead the majority appear very positive about the future and are keen to validate the beneficial use of music in their lives as they move through the advancing years. The next section looks to interpret their feelings on the value of music in their marriages in overcoming the challenges of ageing and how it can provide hope and new opportunities.

### 8.3.2 Future selves

As demonstrated in this study so far the respondents' thoughts on dealing with their everyday lives frequently centres on the use of music to maintain an active lifestyle. This facilitates feelings of togetherness, builds social contact with others, supports physical activity, enhances emotional engagement and sustains cognitive skills. However there is a need to now address their thoughts on the future and how they visualise their next steps as a couple moving through the retirement years. As mentioned earlier in this chapter there is reference to the decline of key faculties relevant to music participation such as vocal impairment and reduced hearing ability, however despite this the overall feelings of the future are extremely optimistic as demonstrated in this quote from Sylvia.

*Sylvia: Well I think at the moment music is.....it takes up a big part of our.....week.....so we are involved in music quite a bit.....ehm.....and I'd just, I'd just like to see that continuing...and hopefully that's not something that...would suddenly have to stop, you know we might be able to continue that....for a good long while hopefully....I mean even if the time comes where we're not....not singing....on a Sunday...we'll still be going out to, to concerts and we'll still have that interest---it'll still be there and.....even if you know...physically we're....we're, we're not so.....strong as we are just now I don't see that that's going to change, the interest will still be there won't it?*

One source of Sylvia and Neil's musical identities originates from childhood experiences and the early days of their marriage, and therefore music has been instrumental in enhancing their marital status. The

strong effect of music has accumulated over a considerable period of time and continues to do so with no evidence of weakening. Sylvia has a very positive attitude to the future and appears to consider that she and Neil are arbiters of their own destiny as they are instrumental in deciding what activities are open to them dependent on their physical state. Not only would she 'like' to see their musical engagement continue but she appears very confident that it will.

The natural interpretation of this narrative is to view Sylvia as someone who is very much in control of where they are going as a couple and if the option to sing is denied them then they will take another route and engage in more listening activities. Interestingly she references the possibility of potentially not being able to sing on Sundays which suggests that she is considering age related vocal problems. There is no description of exactly what she means and it is clearly not a mobility issue as her next sentence describes 'going out to concerts'. This suggests that currently singing is of paramount importance which, in the future, could revert to concert outings as the focal point in their musical lives. There is also an implication that musical properties left by giving up Sunday singing would be replaceable through adapting to other activities and this demonstrates the power of music to provide emotional, spiritual, social and cognitive nourishment on many levels.

Given that she is in a close relationship with Neil, Sylvia appears to be highly receptive to his needs and emotions as at no point in her dialogue does she suggest that they participate in individual musical pursuits. Sylvia's passing comment that despite recognising the inevitable diminishing strength concern, nothing can affect their interest in music and that they would be able to successfully navigate their way through such problems. She queries this continued interest by the addition of 'won't it' to her sentence, possibly more to reassure herself than directly to respond to the interview question. Interestingly other participants also reiterate that the interest in music will be constant, an example being from Eileen's narrative where she states 'it is something we'll sort of.....that we're both interested in so we'll always be interested in it'. Clearly music has the ability to surpass age related obstacles and this is evident from Sylvia's narrative which represents a vision of positive future selves whereby she is in command over how, as a married couple, they can adapt to and capitalise on the benefits of music for 'a good long while'.

Sylvia's dialogue supports the findings by van Ness et al (2012) that couples need to adapt to ageing and change the everyday structure of their lives through couple-orientated interventions in order to support and enhance their daily lives. Other participants fully endorse Sylvia's

comments by implying that their musical interaction will carry on in a similar fashion in the years ahead however, in line with the van Ness et al study, there is a common thread here which suggests the need to change activities when mobility becomes a problem. Other participants proffer similar viewpoints and an awareness of the need to adapt. Graham suggests that life will be 'much the same as before' although if he is 'struck down with illness' he might listen to more music in the house or broaden his interests in being more enthusiastic about attending operas, with his wife Lucy. Opera is not a favoured musical genre for Graham but he seems to be aware that mutual interaction with his spouse can enhance couplehood. Paradoxically by being prepared in the future to engage in something he is ambivalent about, Graham opens himself up to the possibility of experiencing feelings of marital enhancement and positivity by contributing to Lucy's enjoyment of opera. This form of emotional and physical support demonstrates Graham's vested interest in the future wellbeing of their marriage and sees the role of music as highly significant.

Jean is the only participant whose husband is considerably older than she is and although he is fit and active she seems very aware of potential age related problems. She speaks at length about the future and how they

would manage their relationship should one of them fall ill. The following quote is constructed from her long dialogue on the subject.

*Jean: Well it depends what you're physically able to do .....if you are able to still go out and enjoy outside musical activities .....then that's nice because it gives you something to plan and to look forward to eh..to be with other people, that kind of thing .....I haven't thought of it in any other way....um..if you're not able to .....uh.....uh.....one of us would be hopefully able to take the other out (laugh) ....um but if that's not possible then you've just got to share it either on the television or listening to music on the radio or CDs or something like that I suppose ---- and depending on what old age you have, depending on what affects you, what illness you might get eh...I mean if heaven forbid eh...if one of us was to get dementia or something like that well that really does impact on what you're able to do ---- mean I used it for my dad so that would be the example I would give um..... .. I just think I just think there's always I think it's something that you have all through your life.*

In general, Jean's attitude to ageing is positive and she appears confident in being able to find a solution through music to any challenges which may arise. On considering their future she places emphasis on the desire to continue engagement with activities out with the home environment. This reveals that the function of doing things together in a social setting contributes towards preserving coupledom and togetherness. These outside activities are meaningful as they allow Jean and John to continue their investment in music as an intervention in older age by helping them to maintain psychological, emotional, cognitive and physical functioning. Jean admits to enjoying the pre outing organisation and views the entire experience as a package which provides her with mental stimulation that undoubtedly generates positive emotions. Her narrative clearly sets out how she would cope in the future with potential challenges encountered

by one of them being afflicted through illness to both becoming immobile. She has a noticeable sense of positivity in suggesting that they could selflessly enhance the wellness of one another by taking ‘the other out’ to musical events if there is a mobility issue. This also demonstrates the salience of marriage for individuals in supporting and assisting in the wellbeing of their spouses especially at this time of life. Jean refuses to be defeated if they are both confined to the home and envisages co-performing music listening activities in the domestic environment. Having witnessed the declining health of her father through dementia (section 7.2.1) and the valuable effects of music on his mental state she is all too aware of the intrinsic powers of musical intervention.

The suggestion that music listening in the home would become more significant as the years pass and mobility decreases is a common theme amongst the majority of the participants. Comments such as ‘Well perhaps I will actually sit and listen to music rather, rather more than I currently do’ (Nick) and ‘I think we’ll be more...um...the listener than the participant you know...’ (Eileen) all serve to show that despite physical setbacks engagement with life does not necessarily diminish and through adjustment music can contribute effectively to successful ageing. Sally, who currently works two days a week, states that she is fearful of full retirement as she is in a quandary about how she and Nick will cope being

together all the time with little to do, especially in the winter months. However as she ponders this during her narrative she reveals that music could assist in bringing a focus to their day and envisages a time where they would 'get into this routine of having music on in the afternoon'. Their current joint love of walking is not so easily available to them when the weather is inclement and will be even less so as they age and become less physically active. Music therefore will provide Sally with salvation from her dilemma through cognitive and emotional stimulation in a shared environment with her husband. There is strong evidence here therefore to demonstrate that music can be shared in a passive as well as an active way and it is this dual faceted nature of musical interaction which facilitates feelings of positivity for the future. Through adaption couples can purposefully rearrange their lives to share music according to their physical and mental needs and thereby create conditions which contribute to their feelings of health and wellbeing.

As well as music's ability to facilitate continuing engagement when mobility becomes a problem as previously mentioned, Neil raises some further pertinent points which contribute to the question concerning the uniqueness of music.

*Neil: .....ehm it's not something that...suddenly when you retire you turn up the volume on...it's, it's always been there, it's always been so fundamental and core to us.....a .....I mean over, over, over, if, if, if we projected our lives forward ehm....again there's all sorts of other things that*



*we'll continue to do and there is some areas that we'll maybe do a bit more we will, we will travel a bit more....ehm as we stop doing other things and, and, and time is....time is freed up----but these kind of....these kind of activities ehm.....as we project into old age as it were...they'll become less because....in, in a very long run....you feel that doing slightly less I guess you don't want to get yourself on to a plane and sit for 6 hours and go through three time zones or whatever....you actually might just want to potter about a bit more, or, or, or whatever I mean I would, I have a very optimistic view of old age----.....this sort of broad, deep core that runs through the middle of your, your relationship is a bigger and bigger proportion because there's less going on round about the outside of it.....and therefore it will...it will attain much greater significance....ehm.....so I don't....I don't see it as becoming a....in any sense becoming less.....ehm.....and proportionately eh.....remaining a hugely important as it is.*

Neil's narrative is very sensitive with highly emotive use of vocabulary.

Words such as 'fundamental', 'core', 'optimistic', 'significance' and 'hugely' all suggest an individual with strong impassioned views on this topic. His understanding of his experience with music is intertwined with that of his wife and is important in the interpretation of how he accounts for the meaningfulness of it in their lives. The phenomenon of the lived musical experience is an essential factor in their lives and clearly an intrinsic part of their future together. As with the other participants Neil acknowledges that in projecting their 'lives forward' certain activities would continue and potentially increase as time constraints ease. However he foresees a future when the desire to engage in, for example travel, will reduce as energy levels diminish. Conversely, as music has always been a fundamental core part of his sense of self and his sense of Sylvia and himself as a couple, it is almost larger than the two of them. He does not need to turn up a 'volume' switch in retirement as music has never waned

in their lives. He portrays music as so vital to their existence that as they age and other activities reduce, music fills the voids created by these redundant pursuits and correspondingly enlarges. There is a sense therefore that he predicts a shrinking in size of his lifeworld but he exhibits no sense of fear, in fact quite the reverse, he appears to embrace the inevitable. Music has always been an essentially personal to them both and by offering even more space for it in their lives in the future Neil optimistically foresees it continuing to increase in significance. Unlike many other activities which he and Sylvia enjoy, music alone appears to have the ability to empower throughout life with perceived benefits, such as enriched emotional and psychological experiences, that last to the end of life. If active participation becomes impossible then passive listening is available to be appreciated and for emotional support, and it is this essence of music that is the 'deep core' which Neil describes as being central to their relationship.

In considering future selves the inter-generational phenomenon of shaping part of their lives in the coming years through integration with their offspring was implied by several of the participants which is worth some mention at this juncture. In section 6.2.2 the importance of having a strong musical tradition handed down by family members is highlighted alongside the significance of effective role models to encourage healthy

and positive musical identities. Interestingly four of the ten participants who have remained with their original partner, unlike the other six who are engaged in second marriages (albeit of long duration), refer at regular intervals during their narratives to musical interaction with their children in the past and in the present. All of the respondents are parents, however the omission of the 'second timers' in mentioning offspring is likely to be due to the fact that children from other relationships can be a highly sensitive and delicate topic, or simply that the focus of the interviews was biased towards the musical identity of the individual and the present couple formation. Therefore as only two of the couples have children in common the likelihood of them referencing children is much higher. Despite this information being offered by fewer than half of the participants, it is a relevant topic area, as potentially had more of the respondents still been part of a first marriage this subject might have received more comment.

The interpretation of the four relevant respondents to their parental role gives valuable insight into its positioning in their perception of future selves as illustrated in the following extract.

*Eileen: I admire, I mean our eldest daughter she...um...she played the piano she had piano lessons and took to those and then she uh...decided at school when she was eight she could play the violin if she wanted to---she's thirty, thirty two now and uh--- so I used to go every week um...to her lesson at school and take notes for her ---- and watching her playing ----she transferred to viola and she uh...she carried on and joined the City of (name of*

*city) uh... Youth Orchestra until she was twenty two, ----um so you know love it people playing making music so we're very you know, she's uh she's the the musician of the family the other's the dancer---- hopefully (laughs) we've passed some music on.*

In this comment Eileen gives an account of her elder daughter's musical journey from a child in the early years as a pianist through to her decision to become a string player. As a parent Eileen clearly sees herself as a supporter, encourager and motivator and there is a feeling that she is enthusiastic about her role in shaping her daughter's future musical goals. Bestowing music as a legacy to her offspring through encouragement to participate in musical activities as a child is a way of gifting her own love of music, which ensures its survival in the next generation. This demonstrates a link between the past, present and future and a clear investment in helping to shape the decision of offspring in their musical journey. The generational progression secures a way forward to the future and Eileen clearly sees music continuing to play a part in all their lives in the years to come through her comment 'hopefully we've passed some music on...' She is not specific in clarifying how her vision will unfold but she seems fairly reassured that the influence of herself and Ewan, through the use of the third person plural, will be long lasting and therefore she has a long term perspective of themselves in the continuum as a musical family. She seems unable to completely identify or describe her full feelings as she states 'so we're very you know' and fails to finish the sentence satisfactorily. However Eileen has obvious

admiration for her daughter, who as a committed young viola player as a child, is now in adulthood perceived to be 'the musician' out of them all with a unique position as a maintainer of the family musical identity. The process of nurturing and investing in an offspring through care and attention can lead to a fulfilled outcome for parents whereby similar tastes and values are adopted by the child in adulthood and contribute to the overall sense of positivity for the extended family as a whole. It can be suggested that this has a potential impact on the parent couple dynamic whereby Eileen and Ewan can both feel a sense of purpose and satisfaction in their parental role that they can take forward into the future as a contributor to feelings of positivity.

The effects of connectedness with children, even as adults, is an asset for a sense of positivity and wellness within the marital union as illustrated in these two extracts from Neil's dialogue.

*Neil: Both our children had music lessons.....ehm....Peter\*\*\*\*\* the trumpet eh, Kate\*\*\*\*\* played the cello and they both had piano lessons ehm.....so we we're both very much a part of everything that they were doing in that kind of context....so I mean music has been a.....a.....ehm.....a great joy to us both.'*

*Neil:...we are able to go to anything that we do decide to go to.....so we're able to participate in that sense....ehm more ehm.....I think, and that, that, that is, that is very much as a couple ehm.....and that, that, that will include and, and again mostly as a couple, that would include ehm.....being able to go to more things that Peter\*\*\*\*\* is involved in although we haven't cracked that quite as much as we'd like to.*

Firstly he comments on the musical interaction that he and Sylvia enjoyed with their two offspring as children and secondly on their current vision to attend more performances of their son who is a professional trumpet player. In exploring Neil's comments it is apparent that their musical involvement with their offspring from an early age is significantly related to positive outcomes for them as a couple and to their visualisation of their future joint interaction as a family. In this case there is a perception of a bond between them all, facilitated by music which has resulted in a high degree of pleasure for Neil and Sylvia. Now in his retirement years Neil is self-aware of the temporal status of his life and is keen to capitalise on their ability to freely choose how they spend their time in the future. As discussed in section 6.2.2 he is intensely proud of his son and overjoyed that he has chosen a career where they both can experience the intrinsic powers of music. His attempt to support their son more frequently demonstrates elements of a desirability and unpredictability conflict in which the future intention is present however it has not been fully realised at present. Consequently the autonomy that they now have to support their son as audience members is so compelling that he feels the need to 'crack that' more reliably in the future. The vision of music as a facilitator of connectedness with their son and their legacy of endowing him with their intrinsic love of music is all wrapped up

in a healthy integration as a couple and their journey through successful ageing.

#### **8.4 Chapter conclusions**

In summary this chapter serves to illustrate the effect of a strong musical engagement within the intimate couple pairing and how it impacts on the respondents' attitudes towards their relationships currently and in the future. It discusses how music assists in the maintenance of a joint identity by nurturing attachment and facilitating opportunities to share in specific pieces of music, genres and activities together; describes the effect of a joint identity at the present time and looks to the participants' visions of the future with reference to age related health issues.

The chapter illustrates the power of music to enhance relationships but it also raises the question of how it differs from other activities enjoyed by the participants such as walking and travelling. Details of the unique properties of music are considered in section 2.2 which are supported by the findings from this chapter highlighting its ability to reveal an awareness of self and collective/shared identity, appreciation of aesthetic experiences and a sense of wholeness and togetherness.

Why is music therefore so important as an intervention for positive ageing in the future? As highlighted in the previous paragraph it can be argued that very few alternative leisure pursuits can offer such a diverse set of characteristics through the lifespan as music, which incorporates psychological, emotional, physical and cognitive attributes. As a core human experience it spreads across a broad spectrum of human activities linking our shared experiences and intentions with others (Schulkin & Raglan, 2014). As revealed in the study by Hays and Minichiello (2005), referenced in Chapter 2.2, music is considerably more than basic entertainment, it is a symbolic reference of how retired individuals like to express themselves and be perceived by others. The highly significant and distinctive qualities of music can be further illustrated when noting that music cognition is one of the initial high level brain functions to engage in the newly born infant (Blasil et al, 2011) and one of the last to fade at the end of life in dementia sufferers (Cuddy, 2012). It is hardly surprising therefore to understand why music plays such a meaningful role in the lives and relationships of the participant retirees.

There are six significant findings in this chapter. Firstly music allows couples to co-identify and this in turn brings feelings of connectedness, giving the marriage dyad a firm and protective foundation; secondly a sense of matched musical values, often acquired in childhood, brings



respect and positivity to the marital union; thirdly music facilitates the sharing of physical and psychological experiences which bring feelings of wellness to the relationship; fourthly, despite fears of age related afflictions such as presbycusis, presbyphonia and dementia, attitudes remain positive as music lends support and enables couples to adapt; fifthly music is considered to be a core element in life which can be enjoyed actively and passively, and when mobility becomes problematic it can still be experienced within the home environment. Finally the passion for music can be seen as a legacy to be handed down by the couples to their offspring and thereby secured for future times. All of these findings are examined in further detail in section 9.4.3 of Chapter 9.

The following chapter forms the concluding section of the thesis. It draws together results from the three analysis chapters, reflecting on current literature and examining the strengths and limitations of this study. The importance of the findings and their implications for future investigation are discussed in full with reference to the timeliness of this research.

# CHAPTER 9 FINDINGS: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

## 9.1 Introduction

This is the first thesis of its kind to address the topic of music and the health and wellbeing of intimate couple partnerships in retirement. It is interdisciplinary in nature and has capitalised on the best in music, psychology and gerontology research. The study has revealed key insights from the respondents' narratives and thereby significantly contributed to the knowledge base of this subject area. Findings represented in this thesis provide important implications for further realisation of the role of music in intimate relationships.

The purpose of this chapter is to draw together the findings from the participant interviews as shown in previous chapters. It will incorporate an overview of the thesis and a synopsis of the contents with conclusions drawn from the chapters. This is followed by discussion of the key findings and contribution to the field with reference to the research questions, including the extent to which the aims of the study were achieved with links to existing research. The penultimate section explores the original contribution of the investigation, including an evaluation of the methodology, and recommendations for the direction of potential

future research in this field. The thesis will draw to a close with a final conclusion section.

## 9.2 Overview

Through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis this investigation has increased our awareness of the phenomenological musical experiences of older aged couples through the lifespan and explored its significance in the health and wellbeing of their marital relationships in retirement and thereby contributed to current knowledge. Information drawn from interviews with five co-habiting couples in retirement has facilitated the exploration of musical life stories and the impact music has on the lived experience. To date, no studies have explored the relationship between music and wellbeing with marital health in the older generation.

The study has encompassed areas of music psychology and gerontology, combining these to reveal further understanding of how and why music plays a vital role in the lives of the older generation. The thesis has incorporated aspects of current social importance concerning an increasingly aged population and the need to encourage and maintain healthy lifestyles through engagement in music as a meaningful activity. It is a rigorous empirical study which has adopted an interpretivistic

stance with a firm philosophical position in the field of social constructionism, phenomenology and hermeneutics as a means of exploring individual narratives and comprehending human experience. In developing our understanding of the use of music in social relationships, the need to further address its role in facilitating a shared experience which has the ability to draw people together has been highlighted. Consideration has been given to the importance of a strong musical identity throughout the lifespan and the relevance of musical interaction as a therapeutic tool. The research has been firmly aimed at investigating the experiences of those in retirement due to a general lack of empirical studies on third age marital relationships, and to further enhance other academic studies which are currently investigating the health benefits of musical participation for the aged, such as singing in a choir. By considering the known advantages of musical engagement on health and wellbeing I have sought to draw specific attention to its benefits on this specific relationship pairing, given that an increasing number of married couples are living longer and therefore spending more leisure time in each other's company. In referencing the title of the thesis 'Those who sing together stay together', I argue that music enhances couple relationships, provides a source of positivity and strengthens a joint identity.

My investigation began with the aim of answering three key questions, namely what does music mean to the participants, historically and currently through their life journey, and how central is musical engagement in defining who they are today as retirees; how do the respondents use music as a therapeutic tool and source of positivity in order to regulate agency and how does this relate to their current sense of wellbeing; and how does music facilitate the formation of a joint identity and contribute to the health of marital relationships in retirement and positive perceptions of future selves? By drawing on current empirical investigations in my literature review chapters I have sought to answer these questions, considering how my work relates to that of other researchers and how it impacts on furthering knowledge of this key topic in social relations.

In order to ensure the delivery of a robust piece of qualitative research, in presenting the analysis within this thesis I frequently revisited the participants' narratives, seeking commonalities and drawing out their personal interpretations with continuous reference to my own individual experiences and perceptions. The analysis and resultant findings are therefore a unique interpretation of this area of music in intimate relationships.

The following section gives a synopsis of the thesis structure, highlighting the content of each previous chapter in order to provide clarity of direction, narrative flow and to assist the reader in negotiating a way around the geography of the investigation. I acknowledged in the opening paragraph of Chapter 6 that the key findings were not mutually exclusive to the chosen themes however I believe the chosen thematic framework to have been highly effective in providing a clear and systematic analytical process. As mentioned in the Introduction (section 9.1) the discussion and contribution to knowledge of the findings from the analysis chapters can be found in section 9.4.

### **9.3 Synopsis**

Chapter 1 served to provide a description of the relevance of this study, placing it in context with other research investigations. In detailing my personal reasons for embarking on the exploration of this topic area I gave credence to the need for such an investigation and evaluated the reasons for my choice of methodology.

Chapter 2 described current literature in the field of musical identity in social relationships and music in healthy ageing. It gave a background overview of key empirical research studies and justification for this current investigation. Existing evidence was found to suggest that

engagement in musical activities empowers individuals to experience an increased sense of wellbeing and connectivity with others; an area which is strongly related to the current thesis. Musical interventions were shown to produce a plethora of health related benefits, however in discussing these key aspects of wellness in relation to music psychology and health, the chapter highlighted the dearth of literature relating to music in intimate pairings and more specifically within the retirement years. The chapter therefore served to uncover important areas for this investigation.

Chapter 3 focussed on the current issue of the retiring baby boomer generation which is rapidly emerging as the fastest growing age group in the UK. As a result information was sourced relating to the increased pressure being placed on the National Health Service encouraging the ageing population to remain fit and actively engaged in meaningful pursuits in order to reduce the financial burden on the health and social services. The term ‘successful ageing’, as demonstrated in the theory presented by Rowe and Kahn (1997), was highlighted as a concept related to engagement in productive activities which improves cognitive and physical functioning. This was linked with the importance of a balanced lifestyle encompassing environmental, emotional, social, spiritual, cognitive and physical aspects; all were shown to empower individuals to

retain control and seek out new opportunities. The chapter also discussed the security on offer within the marital partnership which appeared to have the potential to positively impact on the level of contentment through the provision of companionship, love and sharing of experiences.

Chapter 4 concentrated on the theoretical framework of the thesis with reference to the historical perspectives of qualitative research and outlining the philosophical background to the selected methodology, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. It provided evidence for the robustness of IPA, explaining its foundations in phenomenology, hermeneutics and idiography, and arguing its suitability for this study in comparison with other qualitative methodologies. The chapter continued with a section on embodiment, validating the use of a phenomenological approach as it supports an investigation which is rooted in the thoughts and interpretations of the human lived experience. Finally a critique of IPA upheld its authenticity with specific reference to Yardley's (2008) code of practice for qualitative research.

Chapter 5 was a highly detailed chapter devoted to a full description of the research process from its inception through to the final stages, again referencing Yardley's code of practice in order to provide evidence of its fulfilment in this study. It outlined the aims of the investigation and



justification for an interview design based methodology. There followed a comprehensive discussion of the complete investigatory process, including all relevant ethical considerations. The chapter concluded with a section on interviewer reflexivity which is one of the most important concepts that differentiates qualitative from quantitative research. Through exhibiting transparency in the interviews and reflexive thought I was able to demonstrate how my understanding of the topic area and participant narratives would facilitate new observations and information and thereby strengthen the validity of the findings.

Chapter 6 was the first of the analytical chapters and revealed findings from the first of the three overarching themes. It focussed on the important relationship with music throughout the lifespan and how this helped to shape a strong musical identity. The majority of the respondents had experienced positive engagement with music from childhood which had continued through their adult lives and into retirement. This sustained and stable connection was shown to forge a positive musical identity that extended beyond the individual and into the relationships with their spouses. An important finding was that for the two male participants who had been less actively engaged with music through the lifespan, their positive support for their musical wives resulted in the development of a joint musical identity. This revealed that

through musical engagement, both active participation and supportive encouragement can create togetherness and enhance social relationships and intimate partnerships. The metamorphosis of music into a lifelong companion was a key revelation which demonstrated how the reality of music in material form could be perceived to profoundly change into a physical companion. This aspect of musical interaction appeared to enrich the lives of some of the participants and acted as a support mechanism. The feeling of friendship with music was further highlighted through the actual physical experience of connectivity with others as a collective group of like-minded people. This sense of belonging was shown to enhance feelings of wellbeing and positivity and further enriched in older age by the support of a partner. Sadly for some of the respondents, negative musical happenings in childhood had resulted in the perception of being unmusical which was still dominant in their thoughts despite their partner's support. For the majority however, musical reminiscences and positive lifelong encounters had resulted in the perception of music as a positive lived experience. Communication through music was seen to be a key aspect of social interaction which was not always verbal and had the power to transcend speech. This was highlighted in this chapter as a significant finding when specifically linked to musical communication and was found to be a vital component in the sharing of musically aesthetic experiences with an intimate partner in the retirement years.

Chapter 7 considered the participants' involvement with music from a therapeutic perspective. It investigated their musical engagement as a means of life enrichment and reinforcement, revealing further insights into its role in the health and wellbeing of their marital relationship in retirement. The process of coping during important moments in life and in times of challenge is highly individual, and music was found to be utilised as a tool to regain control through the adoption of specific courses of action and thereby provide nurturing. This positive interaction with music suggested its important contribution to social reconstruction. Despite the personal nature of the participants' needs to seek sustenance, the couples were able to share their experiences and this implied that music can instil a sense of unity within the marital partnerships. Music was shown to facilitate feelings of empowerment in the definition of self as an individual and as a member of the dyadic relationship. Furthermore music was found to have a spiritual dimension, both religious and secular, through the intensity of emotional experiences. Aspects of communication were also highlighted in this chapter, as in chapter 6, to demonstrate the effect of music on this relationship unity and the resultant feelings of joy and comfort. The participants were able to negotiate specific types of musical engagement within their daily lives to satisfy emotional, physical and psychological needs. Singing and the importance of lyrics were then discussed with reference to feelings of

positivity and wellbeing. The combination of a profound religious faith and the use of music for praise were found to provide a heightened spiritual experience probably due to the intensity of emotions which can be engendered through musical participation. This chapter provided an important insight into how couples interact with music and each other in retirement from a holistic perspective.

Chapter 8 drew together the findings from the previous two chapters and revealed how a lifelong interaction with music and its many uses in daily life served to enhance relationships in older age and assist in strengthening the unity between intimate pairings. It considered the participants' current uses of music within their marriages and their thoughts on its role in their future together. It was apparent that the findings from the other two analysis chapters were highly relevant to the respondents' relationship with music thus far in life and reflected on their current perceptions of its importance in their marriages. The increase in mutual leisure time through retirement allowed couples to enjoy the experience of relationship attachment through opportunities to share in specific pieces of music, genres and activities together. The thesis acknowledged the participants' reflections on how they identified with music and each other within the marital union and how this impacted on their perceptions of successful ageing. The majority of findings were

located in this final analysis chapter as it captured a currently overlooked, yet highly important area of music in social relations. Six significant points were raised: 1) music allows couples to co-identify bringing feelings of connectedness, 2) matched musical values bring respect and positivity to the marital union, 3) music allows couples to share physical and psychological experiences which bring feelings of wellness to the relationship, 4) despite fears of age related afflictions attitudes remain positive as music lends support and enables couples to adapt, 5) music is deemed to be an important element in life which can be enjoyed actively and passively, and when mobility becomes problematic it can still be experienced within the home environment and finally 6) the passion for music can be seen as a legacy to be handed down by the couples to their offspring and thereby secured for future times.

Chapter 9 draws the thesis to a close with a synopsis of the investigation, followed by a discussion of the findings and methodology and suggestions for future research in this field.

Having summarised the outline of the thesis and chapter contents I now present the key findings in relation to the research questions in more detail and discuss some of the interacting factors.

## 9.4 Contribution to the field

This thesis has delivered an in depth understanding of the complexities of music in the health and wellbeing of older couples in retirement. Important implications from the findings are now detailed by revisiting the research questions as referenced in section 1.4 to provide a more thorough discussion alongside links to other research literature as described in Chapter 2. I have chosen to consider the questions specifically in relation to the two categories under investigation in this study as outlined in the music literature review (Chapter 2) namely, musical identity in social relationships and music and healthy ageing. In utilising a systemic approach to the research questions I aim to demonstrate how results gathered from the participants in Chapters 6 to 8 using the inductive methodology IPA culminated in revealing key insights into this field of music and intimate relationships in the third age.

### 9.4.1 Research question 1

**What does music mean to the participants, historically and currently through their life journey, and how central is musical engagement in defining who they are today as retirees?**

The importance of a lifelong relationship with music spanning from childhood, through adulthood and into retirement was clearly recounted

by the majority of the participants. Their narratives illustrated a strong vision of music from their past which impacted on their perceptions of it in the present. For some, such as Lucy, music appeared addictive and something which could not be set aside or ignored (section 6.2.1). There were only two of the men, Nick and Graham, who reported that music was important but not central to their lives, and they were keen to support their musical wives and thereby allowed music to become an integral part of their marriage which was of mutual benefit (section 6.3.1). This supported the work of Miller (2000) as highlighted in section 2.2 which suggested that music, through its aesthetic qualities, is adaptive and can result in the formation of a bonding process that centres on benefitting others. Music has the power to engage people in many ways through its ability to stimulate psychologically, emotionally and physically and it seemed that the appeal of music's intrinsic qualities and its multifaceted nature assisted in encouraging the couples to seek it out as a means of experiencing marital togetherness. For the majority of the couples such as John and Jean, music was crucial to their marital partnership and appeared to strengthen as they aged, providing a source of great comfort and joy. This therefore demonstrates the potential positive relationship between music and coupledness happiness.

This is not to suggest that other forms of activities cannot replicate similar bonding processes and the resultant positive outcomes, however music did appear to be particularly effective through its accessibility to all on many levels and its ubiquitous nature. Unlike many other leisure pursuits it can be experienced both passively and actively through listening and musical participation and the respondents demonstrated extensive use of both forms of engagement. Despite the fact that several, such as Eileen and Nick, suffered from various confidence issues concerning musical ability, largely stemming from negative musical experiences in childhood, they were still able to experience music and reap the many benefits on offer. This is key to understanding how people in retirement can continue to engage in music and enjoy its rewards with their partners, constructing a joint sense of self as a couple and thereby enriching the meaningfulness of life. An example of this was seen in the relationship between Neil and Sylvia, who both engaged in singing and concert attendance together and this promoted their sense of joint identity and acted as a catalyst for mutual interaction (see sections 6.2.4 and 7.3.3).

The thesis showed that some of the respondents had formed a joint identity with the music itself and perceived it to be a friend in life in an almost physical capacity. Not only did they identify with it in a social



sense (Tarrant, North & Hargreaves, 2002) but they seemed to be strongly influenced by its ability to be there as a constant in life. This indicated that the sense of closeness and intimacy with a significant 'other', whether it is a partner or as in Neil's case the transformation of music into a friend, (section 6.2.1), is an important part of social integration. This can be linked to the work of Stanton (1997), where findings suggested that the most robust way of experiencing social interaction was to be married and this resulted in increased longevity and healthier lives. Furthering the work of researchers such as DeNora (2000) and Hargreaves, MacDonald & Miell (2005) who demonstrated how musical habits define relations between friends and intimates and shape the collective identity, this investigation showed how the construction of a musical connectedness with a spouse opened up increased opportunities for communication and feelings of togetherness. A practical factor for this specific age group of retirees was having more available leisure time giving them the opportunity to share musical experiences without the encumbrances of the workplace, and these were interpreted by the majority to be highly positive. Not only were the participants able to encounter mutual engagement through verbal communication but there appeared at times to be an almost spiritual communing between the pairings. This was expressively illustrated by Jean (section 6.2.4) when she described sitting with John at a concert ostensibly 'being there on

your own but not on your own'. Here she recognised the special relationship she experienced with her husband which was enriched by listening to music and this facilitated a silent communication between them. This interesting point serves to suggest that music has the power to strengthen the bond between spouses which can potentially grow and develop through a marriage and be carried on into the retirement years.

Role models from childhood appeared to serve as crucial elements in the way the participants negotiated their interaction with music today. For those who were fortunate to have positive musical experiences from a young age such as Sylvia and Eileen (section 6.2.1), the rewards were numerous and resulted in a strong musical identity and support mechanism. This was apparent through the lifespan and continued on into the later years extending into the marital relationship as illustrated by Jean (section 6.2.1). This helps us to understand the importance of music as the constructor of a robust framework for intimate partnerships with firm roots in early experiences that grow and develop as the years progress.

As could have been predicted given the nature of data collection, the participants' narratives all contained an element of reminiscence, associating music with people, events and places. The majority of the

recollections were positive and the results highlight the importance of partner associated memories (section 8.2.2) especially when linked with specific pieces and genres of music which have been shared, often at key moments, and these serve to enhance cognition and emotional involvement. Even though research by Baker, Grocke and Pachana (2012) dealt with dementia sufferers and their spouses, their results are relevant to this investigation as they showed that a joint identity is strengthened through spending quality time with a partner and part of this experience involves engaging in past memories. Linking this to the current study suggests that as retirees each participant was able to use music to define their relationship through pleasurable memories of joint interaction throughout the lengthy period of their marriage, and this brought feelings of pleasure and wellbeing to the relationship.

In summary, the importance of a strong bond with music, especially if it is rooted in childhood experiences and has had the opportunity to develop throughout the lifespan, appeared to play a significant role in the health and wellbeing of the marital relationship. The thesis does not claim that this is mutually exclusive to music but it does stress that the intrinsic powers of music appeared to facilitate the provision of physical, cognitive, psychological and emotional experiences and therefore feelings of togetherness in the dyadic pairing. This contributes to the subject of

music and social relations in retirement by indicating that music assisted the retired couples in defining who they are as individuals and within the marital union through shaping a joint identity.

#### 9.4.2 Research question 2

**How do the respondents use music as a therapeutic tool and source of positivity in order to regulate agency and how does this relate to their current sense of wellbeing?**

It is important to consider the findings of this study in relation to the participants' actual uses of music in their daily lives. Chapter 7 in particular reported that for the majority of the retirees music was utilised as a means of therapy and a coping mechanism in order to restore or enhance an emotional state. Participants indicated that music enabled them to self-manage and proffered a supportive network.

Jean and John for example, relied on music to produce cognitive strategies in times of need which empowered them to take control of their lives and this appeared to be absorbed into, and enhance their marital relationship (section 7.2.1). For Lucy, whose husband is mildly autistic (section 7.2.2), music provided her with the tools to set aside his specific difficulties at times and construct moments of togetherness, which she felt enhanced the wellbeing of their marriage and satisfied her need to

connect with him. The majority of the participants were seen to make use of music to reconstruct a sense of self when agency control became challenging, and this acted as psychotherapeutic assistance to re-establish positive feelings of health and wellbeing within the marital partnership.

This form of social reconstruction through music was high priority where regret and insecurity were evident. For example, the use of counterfactual thinking of 'what if' could initially seem to be self – destructive (section 7.2.3), however it appeared to have particular benefits in demonstrating the power of music to alleviate the pain of the past and provide a suitable coping mechanism (Johnson & Sherman, 1990). For example, music gave Sally the strength to counteract feelings of negativity and directly interact with music and thereby foster an obvious passion for singing. The effect of this approach was seen to influence her husband who subsequently offered active support, increased personal engagement and willingness to share her interest. It is natural for spouses to want to please each other but this finding demonstrates the qualities of music to inspire others in close relationships. This provides an important insight into the value of music as a highly accessible resource within marriage to draw people together through its diverse of methods of engagement and multifaceted genres.

People's responses to music are highly individual and for those with a firm religious faith music was seen to serve to heighten spiritual experiences which many found to be deeply emotional and uplifting. This study supported the research of Dillon and Wink (2007) which suggests that retired people have more of a leaning towards religion than their working counterparts, as all of the respondents in this current study appeared to be keen church goers. They acknowledged that the beauty of music and benefits of choral music brought them emotional nourishment and sustenance and enhanced the worshipping procedure. Detail from Graham's narrative (section 7.3.1) assisted in adding a further insight into this topic whereby the worshipping process appeared to be a four way construct between music, himself, God and his wife. All parts seemed to fuse together to form a deeply satisfying and joyful experience suggesting that music led worship can increase feelings of positivity for individuals and enhance relationships. The majority of the participants particularly highlighted vocalising in church which served to connect them to God, to others and to a partner and this in turn appeared to facilitate deeply rooted healthy aspirations for the future. In fact singing in general was found to produce feelings of joyfulness, as a social activity to be enjoyed with others.

This current research has supported previous findings that passive and active musical participation can have a therapeutic effect on individuals and help them with cognitive reappraisal in times of need resulting in increased feelings of self-expression, creativity, emotion and enhanced wellbeing (Chin and Rickard, 2014; Clarke, Dibben and Pitts, 2010; Saarikallio, 2008; Chamorro-Premuzic & Furnham, 2007). A key finding is how this increased positivity enriches a sense of unity within marital partnerships and assists in the dynamic process of relationship development in the retirement years.

#### **9.4.3 Research question 3**

**How does music facilitate the formation of a joint identity and contribute to the health of marital relationships in retirement and positive perceptions of future selves?**

The major contribution to further knowledge of this subject area was found in Chapter 8 which covered the response to this research question. It highlighted how a strong attachment to music, frequently through the lifespan, played a key role in the formation of healthy joint identities within marriage and positive thoughts of the future. Engagement in meaningful musical activities enriched the couples' leisure time through common shared experiences which facilitated communication and feelings of positive togetherness. Despite the increased likelihood of suffering from

age related illness the participants remained positive in their outlook and appeared to have optimistic visions of musical engagement together in the future.

Six significant findings were highlighted from the respondents' narratives in section 8.4 which served to address the question of how a joint musical identity keeps marital relationships healthy with positive thoughts of the years ahead (future selves). At first look some of these findings may seem to be similar in nature however I have chosen to separate them in order to discuss the finer points and offer a more nuanced interpretation.

Firstly music was found to create a feeling of co-identity which provided a firm and secure framework for the marital relationship. This supported the writing of Turino (2008) in his book 'Music as Social Life: The Politics of Participation', who suggested that musical engagement in the social setting has the power to create a feeling of fused identities. His work explicitly relates to this investigation as it discusses the choice of shared habits and attributes which bind individuals together: Turino termed these to be 'cultural cohorts'. The conceptualisation of oneself as part of a couple facilitates the recognition of these 'cohorts' or shared habits which in turn assist in the process of binding to another individual. Music is linked to the human social instinct to have contact with other human



beings and it reinforces our sense of the social self by connecting our shared experiences and meanings. Furthering research into the connection between music and social bonding (Cross, 2009; Hagen & Bryant, 2003) this study demonstrates that music has the capacity to bring people together closely, and has a significant influence in intimate relationships, especially during the retirement years when couples have more time to devote to each other and to their joint leisure pursuits. By laying down this sense of togetherness music provides a stable base for the marriage and thereby enriches the marital experience through the formation and maintenance of a joint identity. As John explained in section 8.2.1, he and his wife had engaged in some form of musical interaction every day in their marital life and this had brought great joy to them both providing a solid foundation or 'bedrock' on which their marriage was constructed. Hitherto, academic research into musical interaction with others has dealt principally with music in the social setting and the few studies on offer that cover the marital partnership are therapy lead where one partner has a dementia related illness (Pachana, 2012). This investigation therefore highlights a novel dimension to this topic area.

Secondly a sense of matched musical values, often present throughout the lifespan, appeared to bring respect and positivity to the marital union.

This investigation did not seek to determine whether specific musical artists, composers or genres engendered feelings of togetherness however it was evident that sharing similar tastes was an important element in their relationships. The topic was expanded by illustrating that certain types of joint musical activities which were enjoyed by both partners in retirement also contributed to feelings of wellbeing. Sylvia highlighted this in section 8.2.2 by describing her love of opera and frequent attendance at opera productions which she shared with her husband Neil, and their joint passion for singing. An appreciation of shared preferences common to both parties demonstrated an appreciation of music, of each other and promoted emotional empathy. As shown in research by Boer et al (2011) into social bonding through shared musical preferences, music can facilitate increased knowledge of another's meanings and intentions in life. The phenomenology of respect incorporates equality based appreciation within social relationships and for many of the respondents having shared musical tastes was an important element in their joint level of mutual esteem. Eileen illustrated this in her narrative when describing the mutual regard she and her spouse Ewan have for each other's musicianship. Current studies in this field of matched preferences have investigated musical taste and attraction and musical preference links to group affiliations, however this investigation served to expand on these findings by demonstrating how joint preference can enrich

relationships and facilitate a sense of joint regard between intimate partners.

The third finding from this study revealed how sharing physical and psychological experiences brought a sense of wellbeing to the marital partnerships. By extending existing research which illustrates the health benefits of active and emotional engagement in musical participation (Cohen et al, 2007) this investigation has provided insights into how the multifaceted nature of music offers a diverse range of engagement options for retirement with beneficial results. A core characteristic of music is its ability to facilitate the co-ordination of body and mind through rhythm and harmony and this has been seen to enhance wellbeing, reduce stress levels, improve social engagement and physical health, and stimulate cognition (Hallam et al, 2013; Ansdell, 2014). These embodied physical encounters with music enabled the participants to perceive their world as positive lived experiences. They preserved coupledness and togetherness through engagement in meaningful musical activities both in and out with the home environment, which allowed them to continue their investment in music as an intervention in older age by helping them to maintain psychological, emotional, cognitive and physical functioning. Music is therefore an action which was found to expand communicative social contact in older age, both physically and psychologically, with an

intimate partner which facilitated enhanced feelings of wellness. Vocal music, in particular the actual act of singing, seemed to provide many of the participants with an enriched feeling of purpose. In reference to their membership of a church choir Eileen encapsulated this feeling in her comment that it felt good to know that she and her husband shared this commonality and that choral co-interaction gave them feelings of mutual support. This investigation thereby gave a key insight into how the unique qualities of music, when experienced through the physical action of music making with a partner, can enhance the relationship in this older age group.

The fourth significant finding concerned the high level of positivity for the future, through the use of music to lend support and assistance in adapting to old age, despite fears of age related illnesses. Engagement with music in the older age marital dyad is an under researched area and highly significant given the ageing population, the increased amount of mutual leisure time in retirement and the greater degree of support often needed for each other as couples age. It must be recognised that as individuals, the sense of self is unique and therefore all humans have different attributes, traits, intentions and meanings which evolve and develop through the lifespan. However findings from this investigation showed that despite their difference 'selves', the positive effect of music on

the attitudes of all the participants to the ageing process and thoughts of the years ahead with their partners was clearly visible. They demonstrated a sense of freedom through an increased time for personal use and this appeared to translate into creative expression through music. Whether furthering music as a lifelong passion or developing new musical interests, all of the respondents appeared to be positively engaged in musically linked cognitive and physical activities which resulted in a healthy engagement in life. This supported the work of current academic studies such as Baer et al (2012), who recommended that engagement in challenging pastimes would keep brains functioning efficiently and help to stave off age related mental and physical afflictions. Interpretations of age related illnesses were covered in detail in section 8.3.1 of this thesis and it is true to say that the possibility of deterioration in health was recognised by many of the respondents with presbycusis, presbyphonia and dementia being highlighted. These three illnesses could directly impact on the familiar methods of musical interaction and therefore it is not surprising that they were the most feared. From a positive perspective many of the responses indicated that thoughts of the future remained optimistic and that musical integration would continue, albeit in a different manner, should health dictate otherwise. A coping triad appeared to exist between music and each of the partners in the marriage

which was both adaptable and supportive, and thereby increased the sense of wellbeing and positivity for the future.

The fifth finding revealed the perception of music as a key factor in life which could be enjoyed both actively and passively, despite physical circumstances. This is a highly important insight into the potential use of, and benefits from, music throughout the process of old age. There was some degree of inevitability that one, if not both of the participants, within the marriage could at some stage suffer from a mobility issue and this would curtail or even cease all active participation in music from a physical perspective out with the home environment thereby altering the dynamic of togetherness. As highlighted by Nick and Eileen in their narratives, engaging with music from a more passive listening perspective was deemed to be a distinct possibility in the future; despite the obvious restrictions this could also be interpreted as their solution to a problem. As stated by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), the use of positive thinking and optimism can bring meaningfulness and fulfilment to life; thoughts of continued future musical engagement within the home were seen here as a possible positive intervention by the respondents. Despite potential future mobility issues which could limit social engagement with the outside world, home listening as a couple would provide a joint mental stimulus, a source of communication, a means of mood and emotional

regulation, increased cognitive functioning and an all round improvement in the quality of life. This demonstrated the adaptability of music to support and enrich older lives in many ways, assisting in the maintenance of togetherness through passive listening.

The final key finding illustrated how the passion for music could be seen as a legacy to be handed down by the couples to their offspring and thereby secured for future times. The intergenerational position of music and the parent-child relationship was evident in the narratives of four of the respondents and whilst it encompassed a small portion of the interviews I believe it to be worthy of mention as it played an important role in the consideration of future selves. The phenomenon of shaping the retirees lives in the coming years through the use of music to enhance integration with their offspring was perceived as a means of connectedness and togetherness. Having music as a commonality within the family unit appeared to assist in the building and maintaining of family connection and interaction and this led to an enrichment of the couples' lives. The participants' children are the nearest link to the next generation, and by bestowing their love of music on them they could potentially offering generative opportunities to nurture and guide music within their family for years to come. During their remaining years the couples could experience part of this generativity and feel a sense of

fulfilment and pleasure. Music thereby provided a sense of purpose and the legacy of endowing offspring with a love of music facilitated a joint sense of meaningfulness and positivity for the future.

Having discussed the significant findings in this investigation and highlighted the effectiveness of IPA in drawing highly relevant discourse from the participants' narratives, I now continue with an evaluation of the importance of the thesis, limitations in the material and suggestions for appropriate further research.

### **9.5 Discussion and recommendations for future policy and practice**

This research has important implications for the specific areas of empirical research pertaining to music, relationships and wellbeing. Recent years have witnessed an increase in academic interest in the ageing process by a variety of social and health scientists drawing upon a range of disciplinary backgrounds seeking methods by which to assist older people in the maintenance of health, fulfilment and happiness. Due to the special intrinsic qualities of music (see section 8.4) there has been an emphasis on social interaction through music as a means of reaping significant psychological and physiological benefits. The results of this study highlight the extensive potential opportunities for further research in this key area of music psychology.



There were a number of limitations to this investigation as it was restricted by the caveats of the qualitative approach and the adoption of IPA. Whilst research does not necessarily have to use a variety of methodologies it is essential that due consideration is taken to eliciting individual accounts in a meaningful and robust manner that increases dependability and credibility of the findings. It could be argued that a mixed methods' approach would have offered the additional option of collecting a wider field of data and thereby made the results more generalisable, however in defence of the chosen methodology the maintenance of a wholly qualitative approach facilitated the capture of in depth subjective perceptions of individual phenomenological experiences. A second interview could have contributed to the findings by revealing more detail about specific themes sourced from the first interview however time factors precluded this. As with most interview based methodologies the nature of the process is retrospective and therefore there was an element of memory retrieval inaccuracy, however the important part of IPA is the interpretation of the participants' reality as they perceive it to be in the moment. Willig (2010) states that the essence of knowing the phenomenon is as it appears to the individual in their engagement with that experience. The respondents' reality was therefore bound up in their reflections which allowed them to embrace a

phenomenological stance and thereby facilitate a detailed description of their world. One potential limitation is that it is feasible that participants may have viewed the researcher as a professional musician with superior musical knowledge and this may have influenced their reports. However, willingness to speak freely and often intimately about the meaning of music in their lives implies that participant narratives were not impeded.

As this topic is a novel domain, IPA was particularly effective in contributing to the development of this area of research. It demands a small homogenous sample and therefore as mentioned previously, from a generalisability perspective the findings of this investigation can only be limited. However as music appeared to be highly important in the respondents' lives and marriages and several significant findings emerged from their narratives, this implies that the influence of music in relationship health and wellbeing could potentially apply to a wider field. As highlighted in sections 5.3 and 5.3.2, the respondents all came from socioculturally aware middle class backgrounds and further research needs to be conducted to investigate the transferability of the research findings to other social classes, cultures and to those currently disengaged from musical interaction.

Expanding on the study by Morgan, MacDonald and Pitts (2014) into the musical experiences of mothers and their teenage children, results from this investigation indicate that further research into musical relationships within the home environment would extend our knowledge of the uses of music to enhance couple interaction. In the light of the findings it would be interesting to study the symbiosis of music and health in the relations of purposefully sampled couples of differing age groups, both heterosexual and homosexual, to examine the range of potential similarities to this current investigation. Longitudinal studies could be considered in order to allow more detailed consideration of the mechanism of this topic area and how a dyadic relationship evolves over time and its implications in shaping a joint identity. Research could be conducted into how the effects of music are mediated by gender differences, personality, age, cultural or historical factors to reveal if perceptions of the musical phenomenon within an intimate relationship varied. Feelings of empowerment through music by one or both members of a partnership and its effects on the relationship could be investigated in more depth. Reflecting on the heterogeneous nature of music, furthering work by Eerola (2011) into the genre-specifics of emotion could be undertaken with reference to its role in the relationships of a variety of intimate pairings from different age groups. Exploration of the meaningfulness of the musical environment or context, particularly in

relation to engagement with religious music could offer further insights. By considering these aspects specifically in relation to marriage and/or long term partnerships would vastly increase our understanding of an area of music psychology which is still in its infancy.

Given the positive approach of the respondents to musical engagement in the future and their perceptions of music as a companion in life it would be interesting to investigate the role of music in bereavement. Do individuals, whose couple relationships have centred on musical interaction turn to music for comfort and support at the loss of a partner? Conversely, do emotion based recollections of specific pieces, musical genres and artists connected to their late spouse evoke memories which are too painful to endure and are these feelings short or long term?

There is a gap in academic relationship based literature concerning the strength of musically driven social attachment processes in comparison with other activities and attitudes, which this investigation sought to address (Chapter 8.4). Further knowledge of the functionality of music within the dyadic pairing would expand our understanding of its bonding role in the maintenance and strengthening of intimate partnerships. Certainly matched preferences and commonalities have been found to enhance attractiveness and relationships (Boer et al, 2011; Rentfrow &

Gosling, 2003; Walster et al, 1966) but how exactly would matched musical choices play a part in the health and maintenance of couple pairings?

This thesis has illustrated positive insights into the role of music in human lives and highlighted the health benefits from interaction with music. However from a negative perspective it would be interesting to determine if and how music could damage relationships? Possible situations where this may occur might be in the retrieval of a memory triggered by a particular piece of music or reference to musical interaction in general which creates an unpleasant or sad emotional association resulting in psychological distress. Or romantic jealousy which incorporates a complex network of feelings, beliefs and behavioural patterns that occur when the quality of a person's romantic relationship is endangered by a real or imagined rival (Guerrero, 2014) such as a partner's intense love of music which is perceived to transcend the marriage itself. In this instance would music engender rival focussed responses and encourage destructive communication and could music in turn provide a therapeutic tool by playing a role in the reparation of the interpersonal dyadic relationship? Additional research could consider the influential effect of engagement with a specific piece at a specific time on

the aesthetic experience and its function in shaping both a self-identity and an identity with significant others.

## 9.6 Conclusion

This unique investigation has developed our understanding of the symbiosis between music and health and wellbeing in third age relationships. Interviews conducted with a homogenous group of musically active retired couples using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis examined interaction with music through the lifespan.

Findings have shown that music has the capacity to bring togetherness through joint musical engagement, both active and passive. It has demonstrated that music is perceived as a core component throughout the lifespan which plays an important role in psychological and physiological health and wellbeing. Results have illustrated that even for the less musically enthusiastic partners it can be experienced in a supportive role and thereby facilitate the formation of a joint identity within the marriage.

Engagement as a couple in musical pursuits brings a sense of fulfilment and happiness as partners experience a joint sense of 'selves' through a shared commonality and means of communication. Its uses as a

therapeutic tool in times of need highlight music as a coping mechanism and this in turn can help to strengthen the partnership bond. The investigation reveals perceptions of music in retirement to be positive, as it empowers people through engagement with this meaningful activity both out with and in the home environment. Findings have demonstrated that music brings feelings of positivity to thoughts of the future and music is seen as a something which can be utilised and enjoyed through to the end of life. Musical identity can thereby be viewed as mobile and something which is constantly being shaped through life by social interaction.

In conclusion this thesis has demonstrated that music is special with unique qualities. It has the ability to draw people together and assist in the maintenance of healthy intimate relationships through the lifespan and into the retirement years, affecting people socially, mentally, emotionally, cognitively, physically and psychologically. There is now a need to act on the implications of this investigation, disseminate the findings and conduct further research into the role of music within couple relationships through further expansion of the conclusion that 'those who sing together, stay together'.

# APPENDICES

## ***APPENDIX 1 Letter to prospective participants***

Jill Morgan  
Department of Psychology  
Glasgow Caledonian University \* (*see footnote*)  
Glasgow  
G4 0BA  
[jill.morgan@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:jill.morgan@gcu.ac.uk)

*Date*

Dear

I was given your name by (*contact name*) as I am involved in a research investigation into the role of music in the health of marital relationships in the recently retired and I was wondering if you would be willing to be participants in the study. The research would entail taking part in a personal interview in your own home with the possibility of a follow up interview at a later stage.

The interviews form part of my PhD research in the field of Music Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University. I am enclosing an information sheet with details of the project and a consent form for your signatures. Should you require any further information do not hesitate to contact me using the above email address or by phone on 07887991322.

I do hope that you will be available and willing to help.

With thanks.

Kind regards

Jill Morgan

*\* PhD studies commenced at Glasgow Caledonian University for one year before transfer to the University of Edinburgh*



## ***APPENDIX 2 Email to prospective participants***

Dear

I am sending this email in the hope that you may be able to assist me in my PhD research project. I was given your name by (*contact name*) as I am involved in an investigation into the role of music in the health of marital relationships in the recently retired and I was wondering if you would be willing to be participants in the study. The research would entail taking part in a personal interview in your own home with the possibility of a follow up interview at a later stage.

The interviews form part of my PhD research in the field of Music Psychology at Glasgow Caledonian University. Attached is an information sheet with details of the project and a consent form for your signatures. If you would like to have a hard copy posted to you please send me your address. I would appreciate a response by email using the above address or by phone on 0141 331 3119. Should you require any further information please let me know.

I do hope that you will be available and willing to help.

Kind regards

Jill Morgan

## **INFORMATION SHEET**

### **Active ageing: the symbiosis of music and health in third age relationships**

Institution: Glasgow Caledonian University, Cowcaddens Road, Glasgow G4 0BA

Researcher: Jill Morgan  
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Prof Debbie Tolson  
School of Nursing, Midwifery & Community Health  
[D.Tolson@gcal.ac.uk](mailto:D.Tolson@gcal.ac.uk)

This study is being investigated for the award of PhD in Music Psychology

Many studies indicate the association between music listening preferences and social identity, with the music of all genres playing an important role in the lifestyles of many people as it is now so easily accessible. Given the infiltration of music into our world through exposure to everyday listening experiences it is little wonder that it can exert a powerful influence on individuals.

This study examines the listening habits and preferences of a small number of recently retired couples who experience music regularly as part of their everyday lives. The study will focus on individual perception and listening preferences as a couple and privately. It is hoped to be able to reveal the understanding of key areas where music can benefit relationships, aid communication and provide a tool for an increased feeling of unity.

Data will be collected from a one to one interview which will be recorded, and transcribed by the researcher alone. Participants reserve the right to withdraw from the interview at any time and to refuse to answer questions. Data will be stored securely for a period of 6 years. Consent will be revisited during the interview for specific topics as they emerge. For the purposes of academic publications all names and places will be replaced by pseudonyms and 'interview quotations' will be used to preserve confidentiality.

This project has received ethical approval from Glasgow Caledonian University.

**PARTICIPANT DECLARATION**

**Active ageing: the symbiosis of music and health in third age relationships**

By signing this form you consent to participate in the above named research investigation. You confirm that you have read and understood the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I.....agree to take part in this interview on the understanding that:

- Complete confidentiality will be respected at all times
- The interview will be recorded and the data collected will be transcribed by the interviewer alone and stored securely
- Participation is voluntary and I am free to withdraw at any time and may decline to answer any question without giving any reason. Additional verbal consent may be sought from me throughout the interview for any specific issues
- Any information I give will be used for research only and will not be used for any other purpose
- Interview quotations may be used for academic publication and as a participant I will not be personally identifiable
- The nature and purpose of this investigation has been fully described to me

Participant signature.....Date.....

Researcher signature.....Date.....

**APPENDIX 5 Interview topic areas**

- Emotional responses to music / what music means to you
- Retirement
- Ageing
- Music and retirement
- Listening/participating in musical activities alone and as a couple
- Role of music in the health of relationships

**APPENDIX 6 IPA analysis process**

Participant's name - Sylvia

Page 1 narrative	Linguistic Coding	Descriptive coding	Interrogative coding	Emergent themes
<p>I: --- I want to just start by asking you if you could tell me what music means to you---</p> <p>P: ---right....well, mmmhmm. Well music became my career because I decided early on I wanted to teach music, so I went to the Academy and I did the MusEd course so eh it was my job and that spoiled it a wee bit for, as a leisure thing for me because it was work. So I worked on....ehm....till....we moved here, just before we moved here and I gave, I gave teaching up and eh...it meant I had more time for...singing and taking part in music, but I can't say I sit and listen to music a great deal but I do enjoy participating and I enjoy singing, so I, I like going to concerts - especially if it's pieces that I've sung in and I know really well...but I enjoy participating in music more than sitting listening to it.....but now I enjoy it more because it's not....it's not a job any more....but even when I was teaching it I had, I had to be singing somewhere – I've always sung in a choir somewhere because I think you, you need that, you need, you need to keep music going for you, yourself as a person ehm....not just giving all the time when you're, when you're teaching.....so I think that's the most important thing---</p>	<p><b>Decided</b></p> <p><b>Academy</b></p> <p><b>Spoiled Leisure Work</b></p> <p><b>Gave up</b></p> <p><b>Singing</b></p> <p><b>Enjoy Singing</b></p> <p><b>Enjoy Participating</b></p> <p><b>Enjoy</b></p> <p><b>Teaching Singing Always Choir Think</b></p> <p><b>Need Going</b></p> <p><b>Giving</b></p> <p><b>Most important</b></p>	<p>Location – Academy Early decision to teach music Teaching spoilt musical enjoyment – loss of agency</p> <p>Continued to work on until move to current home – gave teaching up (does not describe it as retiring) Had increased time then for music</p> <p>Doesn't listen much</p> <p>Concert going – prefers familiar pieces that she's performed Main musical pleasure is singing especially in choirs</p> <p>Even when working she had to have singing – innate need Prefers performance to listening</p> <p>Music is for herself v teaching is for others Enjoys it more now as it's not a job Needs music is – reassurance – needs for herself as a person Teaching equates to giving all the time – she clearly doesn't feel she got much back as a teacher Personal musical identity</p>	<p>Clearly proud of place of study Self-questioning – did teaching mean a loss of musical identity? Resilient- motored on.</p> <p>Describes retirement as 'gave up' – what is being given up and what is gained?</p> <p>Prefers participation – seems to be happier with social engagement of performance. Social interaction with other music lovers? What is it about singing that is so important? Own musical instrument – highly personal? Does 'not having to do something' mean it's more enjoyable?</p> <p>High degree of need. Self-fulfilment through music. Reclamation of personal musical identity Transformation of self from teacher to performer</p>	<p>Central position Marker of achievement</p> <p>Identity Loss of agency Regret/self - reflection</p> <p>Life changing event Control</p> <p>Vocal music</p> <p>Social setting Importance of singing as a constant in life/music as salvation</p> <p>Enjoyment - emotion Vocal music</p> <p>Social setting (choir)</p> <p>Central position Reclamation of identity/control</p>

## APPENDIX 7 Quotes for emergent theme 'Music as a channel of communication'

(Colour coding - Eileen, Ewan, Neil, Sylvia, Graham, Sally, Jean, John)

Pg 14/15 Tom Paxton's still going on going so you know it was only last year eighteen months ago that we went to see him in (name of city) ... so we'd go and see every time he came to (name of place) we'd go over to see him um....his music is just sort of its very personal to him the songs he he's...I don't know if you know Tom Paxton but um .....he's got two daughters as well and so I suppose one or two of the songs are about his daughters and you sort of can relate to what he's he's talk singing

Pg 8/9 . So you know if I'm conducting as I---the music director up at church, if he's away then he asks me to take the choir, to rehearse them and then to take uh, to conduct on the Sunday, Sunday morning, you know. And if it is, if the line is carrying onto make sure that they know it's, you know, it's carrying on. When we rehearse particularly, you know – "Think what you're singing, folks." So it's music and words to music, it's not just music.

Pg 31 Uhm (sigh).....it probably is...it does have some impact, but it probably stems back from the fact that we both...uhm...in our own ways have an appreciation of music and I think that's why its more important because that's how we met. And music has been, has been part of both our lives for, for a long time. It's the same interests I suppose, you can look at it, it in that light. We have uhm.....a lot of em, similar interests.

Pg 4 ... the first time I heard live, the...Mozart's Concerto for...Flute and Harp I think it is.....eh it was a family holiday with the children on the beach, a beach concert in [name of French village]...and every time I hear that I'm back in that beach in [name of French village] and the children are there and my brother's family were there also and I can picture the, the, the orchestra up at the stage on the beach and so....you know all the emotion from that ehm.....so I think it's a, it's the....it's a mixture of the, the consciously constructed emotion from the composer.....ehm....to some extent and your sort of personal....your, your personal engagement eh with the music...'

Pg 17/18 ...we'll walk together and, and really enjoy our walks and that because of the conversations you have that can be, that can be fairly kind of profound...and not profound - it can be at a fairly deep level, it's not just act of one foot in front of the other at the same time together ehm.....because of the conversations you have and the, the company that you have ehm.....we enjoy, we enjoy travelling together.....and again that, that, that, that's interesting we, we enjoy it ehm.....but I suppose what I'd say is what separates out music ehm.....if you take it over the kind of totality of that relationship or say that a certain music is that.....ehm.....it is.....it is at the....it's at the centre, well it's, it's much more at the centre....I would say ehm.....it is.....it's something that's always there

Pg 5 ...think that's why I asked to join the [name of church] choir because it was coming up to Christmas and he was forever going off to rehearsals and I thought 'Well I'd like to go too!' so that's when I phoned Geoff\*\*\* and said 'Can I join?' (laughs) so he said yes if I could sing alto then I could come along and sing alto so ehm that made such a difference because then I was involved as well and we were going out together....and sharing the same things.....and then it's good because when we come home we talk about what we've been doing and ehm....how did it go.....and yeah-

Pg 17 you're sitting with somebody but you're not sure what they're....feeling if they're responding to the music in the same way you do and it's nice if you can say afterwards....you know 'Oh wasn't that special the way they did that or sang that' or whatever....and you, you realise you're, you're sharing the same experience from the music I suppose but.....ehm....I hadn't thought about it really, just you're aware of your response to the music, but you don't know whether the other person is feeling the same.....unless you talk about it afterwards, mmmhmm.

Pg 18 ---oh quite a lot I think, yeah.....ehm.....well just thinking of The Magic Flute you know on the way home we're sort of....just the various...singers and what we thought...of their

performance and ehm.....we'd be comparing it to ways we've heard it be done before and we do, we do talk about it afterwards, yeah---

Pg 18 ---I think it's just....it's a, it's a good feeling to know there's somebody else getting the same.....response to, to the music you know, we're both sort of....there's an empathy there – we're feeling the same....feelings ehm.....as we're, as we were listening. It doesn't always work I mean there might be something he's listened to and.....it.....and it didn't mean anything to me but I mean I think that happens when he listens to Elgar or something I just don't get it, but he....you know he obviously responds in a different way...it's bound to happen I think, isn't it?--- so it is nice when we come away and we say 'Oh I really enjoyed that, didn't you?' and 'Oh yes and wasn't that, that good?' and.....that is quite important to me....feeling the same way---

Pg 19 I think it's probably because we share.....music so much in our lives---that if we didn't have the same feeling about it and we disagreed about it... ehm that, that, that might make a difference actually in our sort of relationship you know....and we we're sort of 'Oh, did you not enjoy that? Did you not feel this about it?'---ehm.....I mean we maybe would accept it but I think it's nice to feel like we both agree about a lot of what we listen to and about what we...what we experience, yeah---

Pg 4 .....I enjoy singing hymns in church ehm and that's I suppose that's partly social....a social thing ehm.....but it's also ehm....a spiritual thing in as much as you feel you're.....you've got some kind of communication with God through singing.

Pg 5/6 P: .....ehm...I suppose I would say the same about going to a play.....if she's going with somebody or whether it's music or, or not....or whether it's a play....ehm....you feel you can talk to somebody about it with somebody who has shared that experience with you, you can talk about it, you might not talk much about it but you can say 'That was, that was a good song' or 'That's a....I wonder where this play is going?' whereas if you're on your own.....you don't have the possibility.....

*Pg 12 .....I think perhaps you need to be in a good relationship to be able to share something like that and appreciate it you know together.*

*Pg 12 because ehm,....I think because there's a lot of emotional involvement in music.....and perhaps if you don't feel that you want to.....ehm.....if things aren't going well with somebody, if your relationship isn't jarring and you can't really talk very easily to each other about other things, being able to share about what you've experienced from the music you're listening to....ehm....I don't think you.....(sigh)....no, I can't see how you could do that.....if that makes sense?*

*Pg 18/19 Oh we do, we probably don't.....go into any great detail because neither of us would consider ourselves to be experts, ehm.....so.....we might, we might.....discuss which, which part of the concert we enjoyed ehm.....particularly.....ehm.....and you know the standard of the, the orchestra or the choir.....ehm.....we went to hear ehm.....an opera ehm....it was one by the \* Drama Society a little while ago....I can't remember what it was called! (laughs) but ehm....normally we wouldn't go to opera because neither of us are particularly interested in opera, but because somebody we knew was it in, we decided we'd go and we actually did enjoy it.....quite a lot and we discuss that quite a lot, the standard of acting, the way they'd done it, the scenery this kind of thing. So yeah.....we do, we do discuss it, but we don't go into hours and hours of pulling things apart, but yeah. It does give you something to talk about afterwards.*

Pg 8/9 Eh.....I think what it did was it gave you companionship you know I didn't feel then that that I I was doing things on my own um.....that I had company that I had somebody to discuss things with ...yes, somebody to be able to enjoy it with to discuss something with to argue about something you know um.....I think just .....just to have a companion to uh who understood and was also affected um by music ... which is really nice because then you you you've got a good rapport with somebody and eh I think I think that's that's very important.

Pg 10 Well I think there's probably various things....first of all if you're going to the theatre together or um the concert hall ...you both decide.....one might say I quite would like to go to that or the other one would say ummm not very keen on that and would rather go and see this or hear



this..then you decide together, you go and you sit and you enjoy it together and afterwards you've got something .....that you've had in common an experience you've had in common that you can talk about okay...if it's perhaps just listening to some music at home even on the television or ....and it needn't it needn't be classical music you know there can be some really really um .....interesting music programmes .....ah...again you can sit there together, you can talk about it or you can .... that was rubbish wasn't it why did you like it why did you not there's always something to talk about

Pg 10.....I think you know you can have companionship with a friend just a friend and you can go to something and enjoy it .....but...if you have a close relationship with somebody and you both have a a really positive experience from either a show or concert or just listening to some music then it sort of draws you closer together... um...it's it's ....it's funny to describe it's almost just like being ....it's like being there on your own but not on your own do you know what I mean it's you're you're at ease.... and you're..... I think you understand each other's minds, you don't always do that with a a friend you can't always get that relationship.'

Pg 12 .....I think if you have diverse interests then there's no meeting point...if you both share a love of something together then there's ..you're you're walking together on that line rather than.....I think I have always probably taken J. for granted when it comes to music I think that's because I know that he enjoys a variety of of musical kinds the way I do ..um....I think I think I just I just take it for granted that I have somebody who's interested who um.. it's almost just like a love together

Pg 20 I think probably um..... J. doesn't have the same theoretical background that I would have and sometimes if we hear a piece of music especially if we're watching the Proms or something like that or a concert on the television and I'll I'll explain things to him as they go along because he you know he might ask a question or sometimes I don't know the answer but if I do know the answer I can at least explain it to him and then he gets a better understanding

Pg 27 I know that right up till the moment that dad died I had music on in his room eh...because it was a.... it was something that he,.... he always knew me and I don't mean that he knew that I was his daughter or anything he knew my voice, and he eh...eh...knew that I would always have nice music on for him or something like that and even when you know the later very very latter stages and he'd be in his wheelchair and I would put on some nice Debussy or something like that and I would say 'like that dad?' and he would look at me and he would go (nod) you know and ... I knew I was getting a response eh from him

*Pg 10/11 But I like, I like going to musical things like that with Jean\*\*\*\*, so we can discuss what we thought about it and how we thought it was played and what the reaction of the audience was and where things could've been improved and em, we, we, enjoy talking about music together when we go to concerts and music things you know?*

*Pg 27 Well, Jean\*\*\*\*\* is quite a good pianist and eh, not so much now, but eh, um,....sometimes we used to she used to play and I used to sing along with her you know? And we'd participate and act together. Eh, we always eh, we just loved going to concerts and musical things together. Um and as I said so that we could criticise, listen, benefit from, become cleansed in a way. Become cleansed, sometimes when you go to concerts and music and a-a-a it cleanses your mind! And, but so, we always we've done things together in that---we've never, there's never, never been a day in our marriage and our life together where we didn't enjoy music together. It's always been a combined thing, it's a very strange thing, but it's a natural thing but we just loved it! And we just loved discussing it and the opportunity to go there and listen to good conductors and good people.*

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