

Socio-cultural influences on Australian adults' musical identities

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Background

Within the popular imagination, musical talent or ability is perceived to be genetic or innate (Rickard & Chin, 2017) and Western cultures tend to identify only those who actively create music through playing an instrument or singing as “musicians” (Hallam, 2017). The conflation of “musician” with ability and/or active music engagement through singing or playing is reflected in research considering musical identity, which has tended to focus on these connections. Where a broader concept of musical identity is deployed, in, for example, the context of music listening, research has narrowly focused on music genre preferences. Any conception of the “musician” identity, is, however, socially constructed; and little consideration has been given to broader socio-cultural factors at play in musical identity formation, particularly as regards to cultural environment.

Aims

This study aimed to broadly investigate socio-cultural factors that have been hypothesised to contribute to musical identity, asking, “What socio-cultural factors contribute to the formation of a person’s musical identity, beyond the influence of perceived musical ability and music genre preference?”

Methods

Australian residents were invited to take part in the research. The research design involved completing an online, mixed-methods questionnaire: individuals were asked to complete standardized measures of self (including self-esteem, self-concept clarity, ego strengths, and personality) as well as measures of musical self-image, education, experience, and engagement (including the MUSEBAQ, GOLD-MSI, MSIQ, an amended version of the STOMP, OM-EIS, and author-developed items).

Results

Data collection is currently underway. First, it is anticipated that results will distinguish facets of musical identity and link these to influencing factors predictive of identity development. Second, it is anticipated that analyses will demonstrate significant positive and negative associations between particular influencing factors and (1) the strength of people’s perceived musical identities and (2) people’s level of musical participation. Third, analyses will address how broad psychological measures of self relate to the domain of music identity.

Conclusion and Implications

The present study extends research into musical identity to more fully explore the role of socio-cultural factors on the development and perception of musical identity. Musical identity influences the ways in which people engage in music across the lifespan and musical engagement contributes towards well-being and quality of life. Findings,

therefore, have implications for how musical identity development may influence adult participation in music activities and individual well-being.

References

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Keywords

Music identity; music preferences; musical participation; socio-cultural factors