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Running head: HOW MUSIC SHAPES OUR IDENTITIES

How Music Shapes Our Identities and why it Matters: Case studies of professional musicians

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Abstract

Brain research has demonstrated that music uniquely contributes to neural functioning, but little is known about how losing the ability to produce music, which may be inherent to personal identity for professional singers, impacts quality of life. This study explored identity and music in the lives of five well-known vocal music professionals selected because they have publicly talked about the role of music in their lives via books, televised interviews, and documentaries. The careers of three of the individuals were disrupted by neurogenic disease; one lost the ability to sing after treatment for vocal nodules; and the fifth individual remains unaffected as she continues to perform. There was no actual contact as only publicly available source material (audio and video interviews, news articles, books, and social media) were used. The procedure of the study selected a balanced corpus of material that provided insight about careers before, during, and after medical disruption. Line-by-line transcripts of video and audio material were completed and added to any text materials. Narrative analysis was used to identify themes related to the self-identity of each of the professional singers at three points in their career: early, established, and post diagnosis. Major and minor themes were abstracted from the transcriptions. Cross coding for inter-rater agreement completed on 10% of the total corpus reached 94%.

How Music Shapes Our Identities and why it Matters: Case studies of professional musicians

Who are you? You might say your name and share some facts about yourself, such as what you do for a living, your hobbies, and mention your friends and family. These are the ordinary ways we talk about ourselves and share our stories with others. But what happens when you're diagnosed with Alzheimer's and forget your name and cannot talk about the work you've done in your life? What if you remember the words to share your life with others but your mouth won't move and your words are slurred? What if you can still talk but your vocal folds no longer stretch and bend the air flow into song? *When you are a singer who cannot sing, who do you become and how do you hold yourself together?* The answers found from the stories of celebrated singers who have experienced progressive dementia, vocal nodules, and Parkinson's disease have provided insights that can help speech-language pathologists work with individuals and families experiencing progressive dementia, debilitating illness, and other identity changing disorders.

Review of the Literature

The purpose of this review of the literature is to explore what identity is, how music shapes our identities, and why music and the development of identity matters.

What is Identity

The concept of identity and self has been a topic of debate for centuries. There are many different ideas on what it means to have an identity. According to the Journal of the National Medical Association, identity is a combination of "one's fixed human nature and one's on-going acquired nature" that is then used to develop a "system of values" which in turn creates a "philosophy of life." One value is considered the "top value" and is the archetype of this

philosophy; it most heavily influences it. Once a philosophy is acquired, character traits are molded from it. These character traits plus feedback from the outside world create a person's identity.

This article also proposed an interesting idea: that self-image, self-concept, and self-identity are three interconnected but distinctly different things. Self-image is described as being measurable, such as weight or personal achievements. Self-concept consists of estimated qualities that one believes they possess, like kindness and compassion, but are not able to quantifiably measure. Self-identity is described as mentioned above (Bailey, 2003).

Most noteworthy is the use of the word 'think'. It seems that identity is largely shaped by a person's outlook towards what they have or believe they have. Does this mean that outlook comes before identity or that the two develop in tandem with one another? How do identity and outlook correlate in development over time?

Development of Identity

The exact time that identity begins to develop is unclear. Some believe identities begin to form in the womb (Pellerone et. al, 2015) while other literature addresses identity as beginning at adolescence (Lerner, 2004).

Erik Erikson's model of psychosocial development proposed that there are eight stages, beginning at birth, in which the needs of the individual conflict with the needs of society, with the fifth stage at adolescence being the most pivotal. Erikson hypothesized the idea of lifelong epigenetic development that leads to a progressive maturing of an individual. He described adulthood as being a second cycle of development. However, Erikson's model has been leveled with criticism, ranging from sexist bias to a lack of examination of the society in which a person is formed (Gilleard, 2016).

Sarbin (2000) characterized social identity as the specific ways self-hood arises out of the meanings that people attribute to their experiences through the use of self-narratives that are shaped by cultural determinants. People participate in activities in the context of their specific cultures. Individuals establish a narrative connection between their actions and cultural categories during these social interactions (De Nora & Mehan, 1994). As such, identity is not something that emerges from the self, but is instead a result of actions that are taken during social interactions within cultural situations. A person's social identity is externally structured as a function of validation within a social group when faced with the necessity of locating oneself in relation to others (Sarbin & Scheibe, 1983).

While identity begins in the home, it is a life-long process. The communities we live in, the opportunities to participate with others in school and through social activities, and the ways we make our living in adulthood all contribute to the shaping of our personal identity. Aspects of how we identify ourselves can be impacted by changing life circumstances and a core sense of self builds over time with lived experiences.

Music and Identity

Music enters our lives early. Parents sing to their children; children associate music with special occasions such as birthdays and holidays; and children become at least casual performers of music throughout the school years.

A study funded by the National Association of Music Merchants (NAMM) foundation compiled common themes from answers written into the "Ban the elimination of Music Education in School" national essay contest. This study gathered data from 1,155 students ages thirteen to eighteen who shared their thoughts about why music is important and should be kept as a subject in schools. Participants were mostly Caucasian girls (78%) between the ages 14-16.

The research team found five main themes. One, that music helps form identity by allowing students to differentiate themselves based on genre or shared musical activity, such as choir. Two, music serves as an emotional release and coping mechanism. Three, participating in music is character building. Four, music also has social benefits such as fostering camaraderie and distracting from more negative aspects such as drugs. Five, the study also gathered positive thoughts from many students praising their music teachers and school programs.

The study concluded that identity formation is one of the main purposes of music for adolescents. Music is used as a tool to share their inner selves with the world and was described as a connector for bringing and keeping adolescents together (Campbell, Connell, & Beegle., 2007).

North and Hargreaves (1999) also investigated adolescents and their relationship with music. They compiled four studies that examined adolescent's ideas surrounding music and concluded that they had a positive relationship with their musical preferences and self-concept. Younger kids and teens also favored other peers their age with similar taste in music and used music to classify the personalities of the people around them. These findings are similar to those of the Campbell group discussed above.

A study by Schäfer in the *Journal of Gerontology and Geriatrics* asked adults ages 57-99 why they listen to music. Three main reasons emerged from the data. The young listened to music as a form of self-awareness, for social attachment, and to regulate mood. Adults those later in life also used music for these three reasons with an added emphasis on music as a tool for relaxation and reminiscence. The main difference between the two groups was not in the purpose of music, but rather in the frequency of listening. Schäfer's (2018) did attempt to include the

elderly in his study but the lack of access to music in their residential environments did not allow for points of comparison with the other age groups.

Other researchers have focused investigations on the use of music with the elderly. One study used two nursing homes for comparison. The procedures for one home implemented two 45-minute music sessions a week for five weeks, focusing on a variety of active participation music activities. The other nursing home did not implement a music program for its members, acting as a control. After the five weeks were up, researchers compared the two groups and found the nursing home that added the music program achieved significant improvement in patient life satisfaction and self-concept (Vanderark, Newman, & Bell., 1983).

Music has a positive impact on quality of life across the lifespan. Dileo and his colleagues (n.d.), who is the director of The Arts and Quality of Life Research Center at Temple University took a deep dive into various scholarly databases and analyzed different research studies to compile an overarching list of how music changes quality of life. She and her colleagues on the project found a small but significant positive effect on mood, relaxation, morale, attention and memory, and socialization. They also discovered a moderate and significant improvement in stress. They concluded that results were largely similar when accounting for the size of each study, and recommended future research

It's clear from these studies that music influences a person's sense of identity during their childhood, through their adolescence, and well into adulthood. For some individuals the influence of music is such that it influences career paths.

Careers and Identity

What people do for a living impacts how they see themselves. Grant, Berg and Cable (2014) conducted a study utilizing employees from the Make-A-Wish Foundation and another

health care system to determine if something as small as the job title itself could drastically impact a person's interaction with their work and themselves. One group of participants were allowed to create their own job title while the other group had inflexible job titles. They found that employees who chose their title experienced less emotional exhaustion due to a sense of self-verification and identity expression, and a sense of psychological safety that reduced stress. Interestingly enough, while the researcher hypothesized that external rapport would be influenced by self-titled jobs the results suggested otherwise as the employees used the self-chosen job titles to identify themselves *for* themselves, rather than for other people (Grant, Berg, & Cable, 2014).

A career that heavily utilizes the voice and interpersonal relationships is teaching. It's understood that when entering the workforce, people have some sense of personal and professional identity. An employee's level of integration between their job as a role and their job as an aspect of their self-identification can vary. Teachers can either see their work as simply work, or they may feel it is a personally meaningful aspect of themselves and feel a bond with colleagues. Friesen and Besley (2013) followed first year teaching students and asked them to answer a series of questions about how they viewed themselves, their relation to their ethnic group, role as a student, how much they defined themselves by those aspects. Even though these were first year teaching students, participants rated their sense of identifying as teachers higher than any of the other identification descriptors used to gather data. The students who most strongly identified as being teachers also listed themselves as having a high sense of personal identity development, previous work experience, and being parents. This suggests that these first year teaching students already had a strong sense of self identity that aligned with the teaching field before enrolling, or that integration of the role of teacher into their perceptions of

personhood developed quickly in the first semester of their program. A developmental perspective would suggest that there are a number of life-course experiences both within and outside of education that helped shape this career-based identity (Friesen & Besley, 2013).

The pursuit of music in a professional capacity also yields positive rewards. A longitudinal study conducted by Burland (2005) involved interviews once every three months over a two-year period as the participants approached the end of an undergraduate music degree at either music college or university. The purpose of the study was to explore the decision making of the student as they decided whether to work as musicians or to choose another career path. The data collection consisted of interviews for qualitative analysis and questionnaires that allowed for quantitative analysis. Her research provided interesting, and striking differences, between those interested in music who went on to pursue performance, and those who became non-performers. Specifically, participants who went on to become professionals were motivated by perceived challenges. They developed coping strategies, such as positive reframing of tasks and negative experiences, that their fellows who decided to forgo becoming professionals did not. They also viewed growth as something achievable, while non-performers believed that their abilities were fixed regardless of the effort they expended. Some sought to assign blame for failure to external sources. Both groups considered music to be an intrinsic part of their identities, an outlet for self-expression, and a way to bond with others. But the participants who went on to pursue performance gained more developmental benefits and personal fortitude than their music loving but amateur peers (Burland, 2005).

As we age, the voice changes over time and can lead to career changes. Research, not specific to the field of musical performance, found that the self-perception of identity changed for journalists who lost their jobs. Others who found another job in journalism but in a less

institutionalized setting reported a feeling of reduced legitimacy. This suggests that when one's career changes it is not just the person but also the activities, work structure, valued socially shared connections that contribute to shifts in identity (Sherwood & O'Donnell, 2018).

A longitudinal research project published in the *Journal of Voice* sought to understand how career changes related to vocal functioning shifted over time. The study followed eleven male participants above the age of 50 across five years of life. Even though they were considered normal in health and had no disorders or underlying conditions, their voices still changed significantly during the five year period. Measurements identified significant increases in vocal roughness, possibly due to incomplete glottic closure. A slight decrease in pitch range and intensity range was also found. Participants self-reported negative day to day changes, and an avoidance of large parties. This implies that normal (nonpathological) age-related voice deterioration was present and progressive over the duration of the study and that it had negative consequences on social functioning (Verdonck-de Leeuw & Mahieu, 2004).

Changes in social functioning, as seen in the research with journalists, and career choices by music students, as well as normal aging are examples of how identity is constructed and how it shifts. An additional factor that can impact social functioning and identity is the loss of career through medical conditions.

Medical Conditions that Impact Vocal Careers

Medical conditions that impact the use of voice are particularly salient for professional performers who sing for a living. Some conditions may be temporary while those that are progressive may end a career. This would be a life changing event that could define the individual in ways beyond or in addition to being a performer. Two types of conditions that have

been reported by professional vocal performers are reviewed here in order to frame the methodology of this study.

Neurogenic Disease

Neurological disorders are diseases relating to the central and peripheral nervous system (CNS & PNS respectively). These disorders include Alzheimer's disease and other dementias, Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), Parkinson's disease, and more. Neurological disorders influence the lives of many people; estimates show that about 47.5 million people suffer from dementia around the world (WHO Team, 2016).

Alzheimer's and Other Dementias

Dementias are progressive neurological conditions characterized by loss of memory, and changes in emotion, language, and mental functioning that leads to a loss of communication and the ability to independently function to the point that total care is needed. There are a variety of dementias linked to specific ways that the brain changes in the disease process. Alzheimer's is the most common type of dementia (<https://www.alz.org/alzheimers-dementia/what-is-alzheimers>). Beyond the physical, dementia as it progresses separates the individual from social others and meaningful participation in everyday life (Nuland, 1994) that alters quality of life as co-constructed aspects of identity.

An article in the 2005 issue of *Medical Hypotheses* by Cuddy and Duffin explored the possibility of musical recognition being spared from the effects of Alzheimer's Dementia (AD). An 84-year old female patient referred to as "EN" exhibited severe cognitive impairment suggesting the presence of AD. Clinician's played melodies on a CD player and observed EN's reactions to familiar tunes, unfamiliar tunes, and the presence of "wrong" notes in familiar tunes. EN was able to sing along with familiar melodies using the correct lyrics the majority of the

time. She continued singing familiar tunes even after they stopped playing. When given only the lyrics of a familiar song and not the melody, she was able to provide the tune that went with the lyrics. EN did not respond at all to unfamiliar songs. EN reacted to “wrong” notes in songs she did know with various facial expressions or an exclamation, which she never did during the correct versions of the songs. Using these responses as an indicator of detection, EN was in the normal range of elderly controls without severe cognitive impairment. The study concluded that musical memory may be in some way spared from the corrosive cognitive effect of Alzheimer’s Dementia (AD) and suggests exploration and more research into this area (Cuddy & Duffin, 2005).

Many believe that dementia patients lose all sense of self as the disease progresses, but Shadden, Koski, and Hagstrom (2009) propose that individuals with progressive neurological disease continue to have a wordless sense of self even if they lose the ability to speak, attend to others, or independently take care of themselves. Research by Cohen-Mansfield, Parpura-Gill and Golander (2005) support this. They surveyed 104 dementia patients and their caregivers and family members asking each informant group to identify the importance of the dementia patient’s identification professionally, as a family member, through their hobbies and their personal attributes. While both the staff members of nursing homes and family members perceived the role of identity to greatly decrease over time, most patients perceived a less steep decline in their identity roles. The researchers concluded that the failure of the staff and family to recognize the persistence of self-identity decreased quality of life because, as a result, caregiving plans were not individualized (Cohen-Mansfield, Parpura-Gill, & Golander, 2005).

Multiple Sclerosis, Parkinson’s Disease, and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS)

Multiple sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's disease (PD), and Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) are types of diseases that can impact communication and the voice. Multiple Sclerosis (MS) is a neurogenic disease, where patients have multiple lesions in the central nervous system. This causes a variety of symptoms, including changes in communication and cognition. Such communication problems are common, found in almost half of the people with MS. Patients also express frustration with their energy levels, and grow notably isolated from their friends and peers due to exhaustion and inability to keep up in conversations. Fatigue, processing, and communication issues can also impact their sense of identity and social roles, as participating with others becomes more difficult (Yorkston, Bourgeois, & Baylor, 2010).

Patients with PD typically have monotone, imprecise, and dysfluent speech. In a study reported by Miller and colleagues in 2006, people with Parkinson's were interviewed and asked their thoughts on themselves and their abilities to communicate with others. Patients described that their voice felt like it was getting husky and quieter, and expressed a need to clear their throat often. It was difficult not to mumble and to accurately get across what they were trying to say. Patients also felt their speech was slower and that their mouths were tight; sometimes they were unable to finish sentences. Many also struggled to initiate speech movements or find the words they wanted to say and felt that conversations had already shifted from the topic they wanted to talk about by the time they could articulate their thoughts. A frequent consequence of these issues was sadness, frustration, and withdrawal from social situations. Many felt their sense of self-worth was lowered from being ignored by other people (Miller, Noble, Jones & Burn, 2006).

On a positive note, King and Quincy (2009) headed a study at Wilfrid Laurier University implementing vibroacoustic therapy with Parkinson's patients. They used a Physioacoustic Chair

that had speakers attached all over it to deliver low frequency sound waves throughout the body. Patients showed remarkable improvement in motor function, with major decrease in rigidity, bradykinesia, and tremor. Patient's also displayed significant increase in step length, concluding that vibration therapy is a viable addition to or alternative to pharmacological treatment of Parkinson's symptoms (King & Quincy, 2009).

Almost all patients with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) experience speech problems as the disease progresses. Once intelligibility begins to decrease, speech ability quickly goes downhill, until most cannot speak at all (Beukelman, Fager, & Nordness, 2011). Shadden, Koski, and Hagstrom (2009) note in their book neurogenic disorders that maintaining personhood as ALS progresses can be difficult because not only is speech affected but facial muscles and even bodily movement that facilitates communication are lost. As the disease progresses, social connection is often reduced, and others fail to remember that the intellect is intact.

Vocal Disorders

The definition of what constitutes a voice disorder often varies. In its most simplistic form, a voice disorder may encapsulate any time the voice doesn't work or sound as it normally should and interferes with communication. It is believed that disorders of the voice affect about 30% of the population at some point during their lives (Roy, Merrill, Gray, & Smith, 2009).

Vocal disorders, such as vocal fold nodules (VFN), make normal breathing and voice production difficult. An investigation of six women with nodules versus a control group without showed that those with nodules had greater subglottal pressure, fewer syllables per breath group, and shorter duration of inhalations than their nodule free counterparts. Overall, they displayed lower lung volumes (Iwarsson & Sundberg, 1999). During reading, women with bilateral nodules

expended more air per syllable and per breath group, though the pause pattern and rate of speech differed little (Sapienza & Stathopoulos, 1997).

Careers, such as teaching, sales, and singers have high occupational voice demand. High vocal users have a higher incidence of vocal nodules. Of these, teachers reportedly have more treatment for nodules than other groups, but little research has been done across professions. Hogikyan, Appel, Guinn, and Haxer (1999) conducted a study that focused on adult singers who had been treated for VFN. Participants in this large survey study consisted of professional groups involved in VFN care and treatment rather than the experiences of patients. A statement in the report of that study about how professionals need to have conversations about diagnosis and treatment supports this study. Specifically, they targeted emotional consequences as key to treatment, comparing a diagnosis of VFN for a singer with a diagnosis of cancer since the career and related elements of life are impacted.

Summary and Questions of the Study

Brain research has demonstrated that music uniquely contributes to neural functioning, but little is known about how losing the ability to produce music, which may be inherent to personal identity for professional singers, impacts quality of life. Quality of life includes objective things such as working for pay, housing and food as well as subjective things such as perceptions of happiness, financial situations, relationships, and enjoyment that provides a sense of self-worth (Grewal, et. al, 2006). Identity is a life-long process that is shaped by the process of building a life and coming to live as well as possible when life is disrupted by illness. One such disruption would be when a professional singer loses their voice whether for a short time or over time with progressive disease. This would be a life changing event that might lead to shifts in identity. Given the previous research on careers and identity, it is feasible that in addition to

losing a career and the connection with audiences that created and supported the professional identity, loss of the ability to perform may result in personal identity shifts.

The goal of the study was to add to the literature on identity and shifts in identity by examining music and identity in singing professionals. It explored how identity is shaped by social communication and everyday activity. The premises were as follows: Individual identity is socially constructed and shared; as individuals lose words to talk about themselves, others, and activities, their personalized identity become constructed by others; and that a continued sense of self is possible in the course of identity de-personalization through inclusion in or reenactment of social group membership. Understanding identity construction related to music in an elite group provides insight for enhancing the use of music as a therapeutic tool that bridges identity and communication competence for those with neurologic disorders such as dementia and aphasia.

The specific questions of the study were as follows:

1. In what ways is a sense of self shaped by family, culture, and opportunities across the lifespan?
2. In what ways does a professional career in music shape identity?
3. In what ways does the loss of the ability to musically perform impact identity?

Methodology

Participants

This study explored identity and music in the lives of five well-known vocal music professionals selected because they have publicly talked about the role of music in their lives via books, televised interviews, and documentaries. The careers of three of the individuals were disrupted by neurogenic disease; one lost the ability to sing after treatment for vocal nodules; and the fifth individual remains unaffected as she continues to perform.

Materials

The materials of the study were publicly available materials accessible via audio and video interviews, news articles, books, and social media.

Procedures

The procedure of the study involved selecting a corpus of material that provided insight about the careers of five well known singers before, during, and after medical disruption.

Line-by-line transcripts of video and audio material were transcribed and added to any text materials.

Analysis

Narrative analysis (Hagstrom & Daniels, 2004) was used to identify themes related to the self-identity of each of the professional singers at three points in their career: early, established, and post diagnosis. Major and minor themes were abstracted from the transcriptions. Cross coding for inter-rater reliability was completed until no new themes emerged.

Results

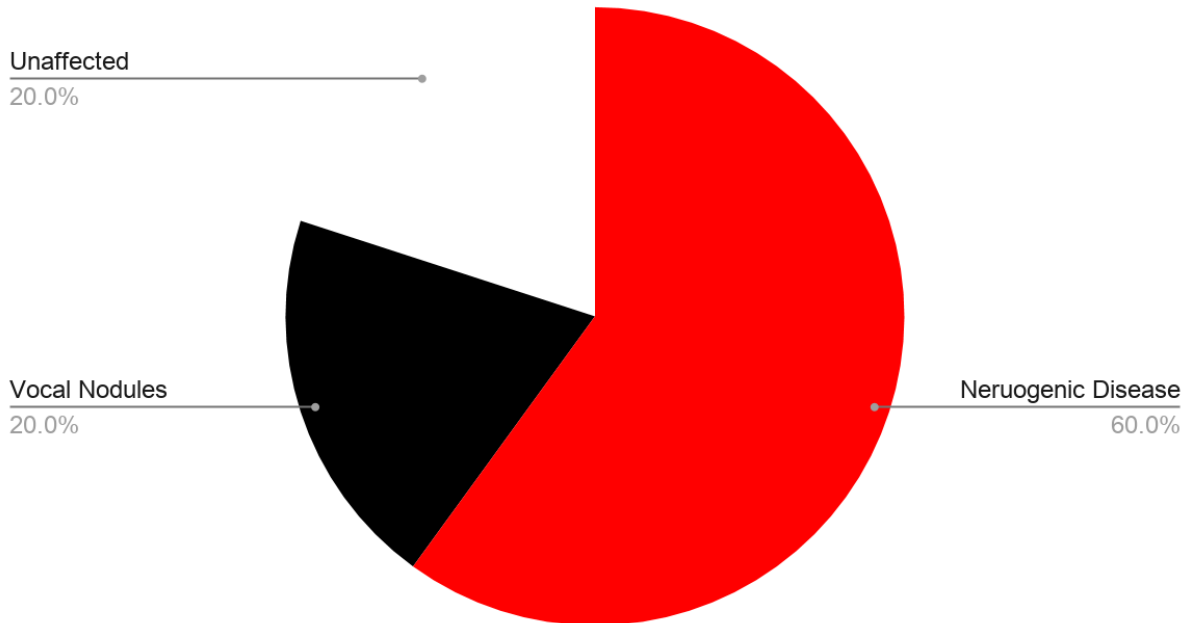
Demographics

This study explored identity and music in the lives of five well-known vocal music professionals selected because they have publicly talked about the role of music in their lives via books, televised interviews, and documentaries. The careers of three of the individuals were disrupted by neurogenic disease; one lost the ability to sing after treatment for vocal nodules; and the fifth individual remains unaffected as she continues to perform. There was no actual contact as only publicly available source material was used. Figure 1 below demonstrates the vocal conditions that impacted the careers of these five performers.

Figure 1

Vocal Conditions of the Five Performers

Participants



Question One

The first question of this study asked in what ways a sense of self is shaped by family, culture, and opportunities across the lifespan. Three themes emerged from the data. These were the home culture of the performer in childhood, the musical culture that surrounded the performer as they grew up, and the way these both endured into adulthood. Examples of this are as follows.

Dolly Parton

The Parton family valued music, and this love for songs and storytelling has stayed with Dolly throughout her life.

Home Culture

Growing up as one child among twelve, Dolly Parton used music as a way to get attention from her mother, who would take time to praise her songwriting and ask her to perform for guests.

I learned early on to get attention through my songwriting. Because Mama was very encouraging. (Songteller, 2020, p. 23)

Her family all participated in music in some capacity, be it through professional gigs or evening gatherings.

We [Dolly and her family] would all sit out on the porch and play music. We were always together, singing songs. (Songteller, 2020, p. 38)

As can be seen, the home culture of music was fundamental to the values and purpose that Dolly persisted with throughout her life.

Musical Culture

Dolly was surrounded by music. Her Uncle Bill was a musician and bought Dolly her first guitar.

I loved that little baby Martin Guitar. I remember loving that thing like it was a piece of my body, a piece of my soul. I just made friends with it. (Songteller, 2020, p. 26)

Bill was a confident person and brought Dolly with him to gigs and auditions. After seeing his spirit and belief in himself, Parton knew she had to believe in her own music and career as a performer and herself.

That's when I thought, 'Well, I have to believe in me.' And I believe that all of us can do whatever it is that we set out to do. (Songteller, 2020, p. 26)

Dolly Parton's singing is also heavily influenced by her mother, who she credits as an incredible storyteller.

It was really like being there if Mama was signing it. That's how I try to sing, too.

Mama singing all those old-timey mountain songs was just embedded in my soul, in my psyche. I call it my 'Smoky Mountain DNA.' (Songteller, 2020, p. 23)

Dolly Parton experienced a rich musical culture from a young age. While much of this was grounded in country music, she was exposed to other genres in the community such as gospel and folk music.

Continuation into Adulthood

Dolly is a well-known performer to this day. Her contributions to music and musical opportunities within her home community continue through a myriad of venues. These include the Dollywood Family Amusement Park in her home town Pigeon Forge, Tennessee and the Dolly Parton Imagination Library in Sevier County, TN where she was born and raised. The library is in honor of her father, who never learned to read or write. While she has accomplished many things, these establishments demonstrate Dolly's lifetime commitment to the home culture that has shaped her life.

Glen Campbell

Home Culture

Glen grew up as the twelfth child of a poor farming family in Arkansas. Music was a way of life in the Campbell home with many playing instruments and singing. His family recognized his talent for music early on and saw him as a sort of prodigy who could mimic songs on the radio. He was a favorite family performer. (Campbell, 2018)

Musical Culture

Glen Campbell was gifted a \$5 guitar at the age of four and began learning from his Uncle Boo. In a few years, he performed on local radio stations. When he was older, he moved to New Mexico to join his uncle's band "Dick Bills and the Sandia Mountain Boys" and chased his dream of music and a life out of poverty.

Continuation into Adulthood

Campbell went on to have a prolific career that was eventually derailed by Alzheimer's. Even then he continued to have the support of his family. His children were his band members on his final tour "The Glen Campbell Goodbye Tour" before his death. Even when he could not remember the lyrics to his songs during the late stages of his disease, Campbell could still play the guitar riffs of his classic songs.

Julie Andrews

Home Culture

While the beginning of Julie Andrews' childhood was warm and bright, this peace did not last for long. Julie Andrews was born as Julia Elizabeth Wells to mother Barbara Ward Wells and raised by Barbara's husband Edward Charles "Ted" Wells.

WW2 began and Julie's mother, Barbara, signed up to travel around entertaining the troops with singer Ted Andrews, causing her to abandon Julie and her father, Ted Wells, in pursuit of their affair. Ted Andrews would later become Julie's step-father. Though grateful for her mother when she was older, Barbara's number one priority was always Ted Andrews, which caused Julie much grief. She described him as a dark shadow in her life.

Someone once asked me which parent I hated the most. It was a provocative question and an interesting one, because it suddenly became apparent to me which one I loved with all my being...and that was my father [Ted Wells]. My mother

was terribly important to me and I know how much I yearned for her in my youth, but I don't think I truly trusted her. (*Home*, 2008, p. 28)

Julie Andrews lived in poverty, which was only heightened by the threat of Nazi attack and bombings when she moved to London from the countryside as a young child to be with her mother and new step-father.

Musical Culture

Most of her mother's family was musical. Her deceased grandparents on her mother's side were both multi-instrumentalists, as well as her own mother Barbara and her Aunt Joan. Julie Andrews step-father tried to win her favor with various gifts, one of which was teaching her how to sing that was also used to keep her busy while the family toured with the troops. She hated lessons with Ted Andrews but when she was nine and a half, she started taking lessons from Madame Lilian Stiles-Allen. After the war ended, Julie watched her mother and step-father's touring vaudeville act. Julie began periodically performing with them just before turning ten years of age and later in life reported that as a child she enjoyed the glamour and the spotlights.

Continuation into Adulthood

Julie Andrews was a prolific performer and actress until her surgery-gone-wrong at age 60. Although her parentage may have been a difficult tie, her relationship with her own daughter Emma is strong. Emma encouraged Julie to regain music in her life after her vocal loss.

Linda Ronstadt

Home Culture

Linda's family was large, loving, and connected. Her early life in Arizona was comfortable as there was money for essentials, but it was not extravagant.

There was never any extra cash, but we had what we needed. My mother used to joke that when she first met my father, he had a red convertible, a horse, a ranch, and a guitar. After she married him, all he had left was the guitar (*Simple Dreams*, 2013, p. 6).

Musical Culture

All of Ronstadt's family members participated in music. Music was more than an activity; it was a way of life. In an interview with CBS, Ronstadt spoke lovingly about her childhood of music.

Interviewer: I know music was a big part of your life growing up, and your family's life, right?

Ronstadt: Yeah I mean, they [my family] weren't particularly great at music...I'm a person that thinks we shouldn't delegate art to professionals only...everybody should do their own singing, dancing, painting, and drawing....in our house we had a radio, but we didn't get out to concerts a lot....but we made our own music at home, it wasn't the greatest music I've ever heard, there are no undiscovered geniuses there, it's just that that's what we did. And we were surprised when we'd go to other people's houses and find out they didn't sing. It's what we did when we were washing the dishes, it's what we did when we would travel in the car, it's what we did when we were doing chores outside. We always sang. We sang in harmony. It didn't occur to me that other people couldn't sing in harmony. So, I've always been a harmony singer more than anything. (*Linda Ronstadt Reveals What Life Is Like After Singing Silenced By Parkinson's Disease*, 2014)

Continuation into Adulthood

Ronstadt's musical career as an adult diversified across performance platforms. She toured, recorded, and contributed widely to the music culture of her generation. When Ronstadt was still active in her music career, her family was an essential part of it. Ronstadt talked about the role of her family throughout her music career, claiming they were an essential part of her success.

We [Ronstadt and her family] always sang together, so I'd always invite them over to sing on the records. We had that family blend, you know. I mean I love singing with my other singing companions...but there's a thing that happens with siblings where you get a certain kind of blend, you don't even have to try. (*Linda Ronstadt Reveals What Life Is Like After Singing Silenced By Parkinson's Disease*, 2014)

Neil Diamond

Home Culture

Neil Diamond grew up in Brooklyn as the son of a dry-good merchant and stay at home mother. The family consisted of his mother, father, and a younger brother. It was not a musical family so Diamond's exposure to music was ancillary within the Brooklyn immigrant neighborhoods among which as his family moved.

Musical Culture

Unlike the other musicians, Diamond did not develop an interest in music until age sixteen when he first got a guitar after watching a Pete Seeger concert at summer camp. He described himself as a shy child who found music as a way to express himself.

Songwriting was his first real interest, which he used to release frustration. He began touring in early adulthood in addition to continuing to write songs for himself and others to

perform. In these roles he contributed to the shaping of music for more than 40 years after his entrance into professional music in the late 60s.

Continuation into Adulthood

Diamond's desire to write songs has continued into adulthood. Since he did not have any family influence pushing him towards music, in fact he was a pre-med student in college and a fencing champion before dropping out of his own accord to write in earnest, it was only his deep, self-motivated desire that pushed his career forward.

Question Two

The second question of the study asked about the ways in which a professional career in music might shape identity. Each of these professional musicians engaged in different aspects of music making, such as performing, writing, and recording, that resulted in an intersection of musical activity across their careers. Two major themes emerged as self-valued career identities: Those who saw themselves more as performers who wrote songs and those who saw themselves as songwriters who performed.

Dolly Parton

Story Telling Songwriter

Dolly Parton is probably most known as a high profile performer who uses glamorous costumes and wigs as part of her professional signature. She has used this 'Dolly look' to create a brand that she has marketed in business ventures and in support of various causes. Dolly, however, sees herself differently.

I am a singer, an entertainer, and a businesswoman. But if I had to choose just one thing to be, I would choose to be a songwriter...I decided to call my book

Songteller because that pretty much sums me up. I love songs, I love to tell stories, and most of all, I just love to write. (*Songteller*, 2020, p. 16)

While this quote sums up her self-professed identity, it is not a new theme for Dolly. She made it abundantly clear in interviews throughout her career and in her other authored books that her ability to write songs and tell stories is the core of her selfhood in contrast to what audiences see at performances.

Glen Campbell

Performer

Campbell's professional career began as a guitarist, singer, and performer, all skills that were embedded in his childhood and introduction to the musical world. After arriving in Hollywood, he added acting and television to his career mix. As an adult he wrote songs for himself, his band, and others.

I really enjoy playing...I look at the audience, and I see these smiles out there, and it just makes me want to sing and play better. (*Glen Campbell Reflects on His Career*, 2011)

Regardless of the myriad of artistic jobs he took up, from writing to acting to television hosting, Glen Campbell thrived on performing and finding ways to accomplish live interaction with audiences, even at the end of his life.

Julie Andrews

Performer

Julie Andrews's musical identity was shaped by her ability to sing and perform. She began her professional career at the age of ten and was supporting her family financially before reaching adulthood. In an interview with Ann Diamond on Good Morning America, Julie was

asked if her career was the best thing that happened to her, or if she resented her career and working for a living as a child.

I think in those days it was the best thing. It was a marvelous learning experience. I didn't get that much of a great education, and I regret that very much. But I think that I got an education of sorts--touring and musicals. I saw some of the most wonderful performers those days...I caught all the great acts...and it gave me a tremendous point of reference later. (*Interview on 'Good Morning, Britain'*, 1987).

Julie's musical identity as a performer never wavered even as she moved from vaudeville to concerts to stage shows and movies. Her professional identity stemmed most from her exceptional voice and ability to communicate through song.

Linda Ronstadt

Performer

Linda Ronstadt's musical sense of self did originate from her ability to sing, though it did not begin on a stage. She was a top female vocalist in the seventies recognized with numerous awards, but none of that mattered as much as her voice and the songs she sang. Ronstadt knew her heart belonged to music when she was four years old.

I remember thinking, 'I'm a singer, that's what I do.' (*Simple Dreams*, p. 23, 2013).

Interviews from the 1970s and 80s depict Linda as a free spirit with a passion for sending messages through song. She crossed musical genres and styles, performing whatever resonated with her at the time. She is most recognized as an award winning singer of folk, country, rock,

and pop. Linda's singing, according to her autobiography and interviews across her career, most encapsulated her musical identity as a performer.

Neil Diamond

Songwriter

Neil Diamond has been a prolific musician since determining that he would have a musical career in opposition to his father's wishes. While he sang with backup performers, Diamond was center stage when performing. Therefore, it would seem that his musical identity would be firmly grounded in performance. However, according to Diamond himself, he is a songwriter. The quote below is just one example of the many times in interviews across his long career that his love of songwriting takes center stage.

I started writing when I was about seventeen. I loved it...I just continued because I got hooked. (*Neil Diamond On Songwriting*, 2015)

Question Three

The final question of the study explored the impact of loss of musical performance ability on identity. Such loss was found to be detrimental but of the five people examined in this study those who adapted and found different ways to interact with music fared better than those who no longer engaged with the musical aspects of their lives. Four types of ability loss were observed: Zero loss, mild loss, extreme loss, and total loss. Three types of interaction themes after ability loss were also found: Continued musical interaction, halted music that was later regained, and total discontinuation of musical participation.

Dolly Parton

Zero Degree of Loss/Continued Musical Interaction

Parton maintained both her music and her identity; she had no loss of ability.

Glen Campbell

Extreme Degree of Loss/Continued Musical Interaction

By the end of Campbell's life, he²d suffered almost total loss of awareness as well as musical ability. He could no longer tour or perform for any great length of time. However, he did not have a total loss of musical interaction. Glen Campbell could still play guitar and sing when prompted, which greatly improved his quality of life. One might say that the only thing he had left was his music, though he no longer knew who he was and had lost a sense of self.

Julie Andrews

Extreme Degree of loss/Halted Music, Later Regained

Julie could not sing after her vocal surgery went wrong. She retreated into seclusion, cutting herself off from the arts. When she first lost her voice Julie said:

I'm in a form of denial about it because to not sing with an orchestra, to not be able to communicate through my voice which I've done all my life, and to not be able to phrase lyrics and give people that kind of...joy, I think I would be totally devastated...it is a tragedy. Thank God I wasn't younger. I mean, at least I've had a wonderful career, but I'm still hoping this will reverse itself. (*Julie Talking about the Loss of Her Voice Part2*, 2007)

Many years passed before Andrews engaged with music again. She will now occasionally sing at special events though her voice is not the same. However, she has expressed newfound peace with herself, and is joyful to be involved in artistic endeavors again.

Linda Ronstadt

Total Loss/Total Discontinuation

Ronstadt faced extreme debilitation from her Parkinson's. She was no longer able to sing, let alone leave her house. She shares this experience in an interview with KPIX CBS SF Bay Area.

It's really hard to move. It's hard to wash my hair, brush my teeth, put my clothes on, it's hard to get up and out of a chair. But once I get going I can go for a little bit. You don't get any juice from your brain to hold up your spine, for instance, so my spine is collapsing a little bit. I get a lot of back trouble--that's the worst part of it.

When asked what it would sound like if she tried to sing, Ronstadt said:

It wouldn't sound like anything. I can't get to the note, I can't make any quality sound, I can't arrange pitch. I might aim for a note and hit another one. It sounds like shouting.

While she did show appreciation for her career, she emphasized that the loss of her casual everyday singing, just for herself and with her family, was what truly changed her.

I had a very long time that I was able to make my living as a singer. And most of the singing I did was at my house, in the shower and with the dishwasher; that's what I miss the most. (*Linda Ronstadt Reveals What Life Is Like After Singing Silenced By Parkinson's Disease*, 2014)

And when the interviewer took it one step further and asked "Does that bother you?"

Linda replied:

You know, if you could walk every day since you were a little child and then one day someone cut your legs off, do you think it would bother you? Yeah, it bothers me.

Neil Diamond

Mild Loss/Continued Musical Interaction

Neil Diamond was always a songwriter as well as a performer. This dual musical identity shifted when he was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. The words he used, "...with great reluctance and disappointment," to announce that he was retiring from touring reflected his sense of loss. (*NEIL DIAMOND ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT FROM CONCERT TOURING AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND TOUR DATES CANCELLED*, 2018).

The announcement can also be considered a change in musical identity affirmation. It essentially conveys that he would no longer be a performer. That part of his musical identity was no longer viable yet the other aspect of his musical identity, songwriting, remained. This was captured in an interview with Jim Farber of *Parade*. Diamond assured the reporter that the end of touring did not mean the end of his music.

I'm working on new songs right now. I always have a scrap of paper or a pad around to jot down ideas. Then, when I have more time, I develop them. It's part of my life. (Farber, 2021)

Diamond has continued to thrive as a musician since the onset of Parkinson's. Later in the Farber interview he talks about returning for a final performance tour since his voice was not affected as much as he assumed it would be. He is focusing on writing music he can sing for the new tour.

Discussion

The goal of the study was to add to the literature on identity and shifts in identity by examining music and identity in singing professionals. It explored how identity is shaped by social communication and everyday activity.

Having a professional career in music did shape identity but could be considered a minor theme compared to family influence. Multiple participants mentioned that they pursued music mostly because of their family influence, and that singing or performing music felt like a natural part of their lives, rather than something they would think of in vocational terms. Sarbin and Scheibe (1983) stated that one's social identity is externally structured as a function of validation within a social group when faced with the necessity of locating oneself in relation to others. The results of this study exemplify the fact that family is a dominant social factor whose influence propelled four out of the five musicians examined into their musical careers and shaped their identities around music.

Losing the ability to perform seems to impact professional musicians to varying degrees, from hardly at all to the extreme. According to the Journal of the National Medical Association, identity is a combination of fixed traits and on-going, acquired traits. From there a person develops values, with one value becoming their top priority. Character traits are molded based on these values and input from others to form an identity. (Bailey, 2003)

The definition of identity used in this study possibly explains the differences in the impact of musical loss between those in this study. Those musicians whose top value was performance, like Julie Andrews and Linda Ronstadt, suffered more than Neil Diamond, who was able to shift his top value towards songwriting. Diamond also had no family culture of music like Andrews and Ronstadt, and therefore suffered no setbacks to his social identity among such a key social group. Meanwhile Glen Campbell was still able to experience music throughout his Alzheimer's due to his family rallying around him, supporting him, reminding him of lyrics, and acting as his band. His family helped maintain his musical identity, which they had helped foster in his childhood. This could also explain Julie Andrews eventual reconciliation with music, as

her daughter exercised her influence as an important member of her family structure, to encourage a return to Julie's musical self.

Limitations of the Study The main challenges of this study would be limited time and ever-evolving material to examine. As the study was going on, new material was constantly added because 4 of the five musicians are still alive. During this time Dolly Parton released a book and has made numerous headlines for her actions during covid, while Neil Diamond began getting more involved and writing a Broadway show about his life. While it was great getting more material to work with, I did have to condense things down into a manageable amount due to the time frame of the study.

Future Directions In the future, it may be worth exploring a deeper meaning to identity. This study looked specifically at the voice, as in the vocal folds, of these musicians. However, most of them expressed resilience after their vocal loss, and maintained a "metaphorical" voice. As in, they were still able to express themselves via songwriting or other avenues and interact with music. It's likely that musical communication and identity formation is more than just the ability to play or sing, and goes beyond into the ability to express the heart of the person, in whatever way they're able to.

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Appendix A -IRB



To: Fran W Hagstrom
GRAD 303

From: Chair, Douglas James Adams
IRB Expedited Review

Date: 07/13/2020

Action: **Review Not Required**

Action Date: 07/13/2020

Protocol #: 2007272961

Study Title: How Music Shapes Our Identities and Why it Matters: Studies of professionally situated identity

Please keep this form for your records. Investigators are required to notify the IRB if any changes are made to the referenced study that may change the status of this determination. Please contact your IRB Administrator if you have any questions regarding this determination or future changes to this determination.