Musical Identities, Music Preferences, and Individual Differences

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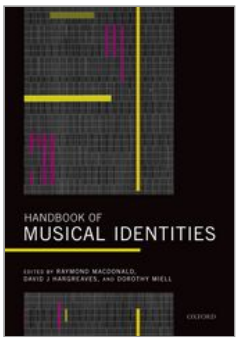

Handbook of Musical Identities

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Abstract and Keywords

Musical identities are central to the formation of identity in emerging adulthood. We examined how standard psychological approaches to identity apply to musical identities, and how individual differences in personality and music preferences are involved. Results from a large-scale study of undergraduates from two university campuses revealed that: (1) preferences for different musical genres vary according to culture, environment, and ethnic background; (2) music preferences are associated with personality characteristics, particularly openness-to-experience; (3) performing musicians and non-performers prefer different genres of music; (4) participants' musical identity statuses have only small associations with identity formation in other domains; and (5) music preferences

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are associated with musical identities, as well as with individual differences in personality, self-concept clarity, and music training.

Keywords: musical identity, music preferences, music training, personality, self-concept, identity formation, cultural differences

THE formation of a healthy identity is the central psychosocial challenge facing adolescents and emerging adults (Erikson, 1968). Identity development during this time capitalizes on cognitive advances, such as the ability to think abstractly so that one can engage in self-reflection and consider the possibilities of who one might become (Case, 1985; Harter, 2003). By engaging in self-reflection, individuals develop an increasingly coherent sense of self. Identity development is further shaped by emerging social relationships within cultural contexts (Erikson, 1968). At the macro level, sociocultural influences modulate the range of possible identities (Schwartz, Montgomery, & Briones, 2006). At the micro level, intimate relations with parents and friends create important contexts for identity exploration (e.g., Grotevant & Cooper, 1985; Youniss & Smollar, 1985; McLean & Thorne, 2003). For example, a sense of group cohesion with one's friends is important not only for adolescent adjustment, but also as a way of defining the self (e.g., Barber, Eccles, & Stone, 2001). Because friendships are usually formed based on common interests (e.g., Arnett, 1996; Rose, 2002), examination of these interests is important to further our understanding of the social aspects of identity formation.

Music provides a medium that allows for the expression of perspectives, emotions, and creativity. For many adolescents and emerging adults, listening to music is their most preferred leisure activity and a central topic of conversation (Fitzgerald, Joseph, Hayes, & O'Regan, 1995; Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). In addition to satisfying their *personal* needs (e.g., regulating emotion; see Lonsdale & North, 2011), music can play a central role in self and identity formation. For the most part, however, musical identities have been considered in terms of music preferences. Music preferences help individuals explore and construct a meaningful social identity (Lonsdale & North, 2011), and (p.248) enhance or preserve the identity of social groups through group differentiation (Tarrant, North, & Hargreaves, 2001, 2002). In fact, when young adults try to become acquainted with someone new, music is the most

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common topic of conversation (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). After listening to an unknown individual's favorite recordings and rating his/her personality, listeners' ratings correlate with those of the individual, particularly for openness-to-experience (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). In short, your music preferences reveal much about who you are.

Although music preferences tell us much about individuals (see also North & Hargreaves, 2007a, b, c), other psychological factors, such as the degree to which one is invested in particular music preferences, may provide important additional information to consider in relation to identity formation (e.g., Abrams, 2009). Whereas music preferences are concerned with how much someone likes specific genres of music, musical identity—based on psychological theories of identity development in general—reflects the degree to which someone is *committed* to liking *any* specific genre or genres, shifting the focus away from the actual genres.

To summarize, it is clear that music plays a meaningful role in adolescents' and emerging adults' efforts to negotiate an identity and to understand who they are. Nevertheless, the nature of this process remains unclear. To what extent are individuals' musical identities related to insights about themselves? Do these associations vary as a function of music preferences? What is the role of personal, cultural, and experiential factors? In the present chapter, we propose that more complete answers to these questions can be obtained by incorporating broader concepts of identity.

14.1 Identity development in adolescence and emerging adulthood

Erik Erikson is regarded as a central figure in the conceptualization of identity. His framework has been used across disciplines and as a starting point for many other prominent identity theorists (Schwartz, 2001; Côté & Levine, 2002; see also McLean & Syed, 2014). In the following paragraphs, we review Erikson's theory of identity development and discuss relevant expansions to his theory that have been proposed by prominent neo-Eriksonians.

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To Erikson (1980), identity refers to a sense of self-consistency across time (i.e., past, present, and future) and context, including self-perceptions and how others perceive one's self. Erikson (1950, 1968) asserted that adolescence and emerging adulthood is the central time for identity development, a claim that has been supported by subsequent research showing increases in identity-related activity during this time of life (e.g., Habermas & de Silveira, 2008; Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010). This life stage provides many opportunities for youth to explore various identities (Erikson, 1968). Failure (p.249) to develop appropriately during this period, which Erikson referred to as identity confusion, impedes subsequent development and can be costly in terms of well-being (see Meeus, 2011 for a review). Although adolescence and emerging adulthood are considered to be crucial times for identity development, such development continues across the lifespan (e.g., Whitbourne, Sneed, & Skultety, 2002; Kroger, 2007; McLean, 2008). In short, the roots of one's identity are established in adolescence and emerging adulthood, but revised continually as new experiences and roles become important.

In addition to discussing the importance of cognitive mechanisms necessary for personal reflection in the development of identity, Erikson (1956, 1968) acknowledged three key processes centered on interactions with one's environment (which have received more attention elsewhere; see Blos, 1967; Grotevant & Cooper, 1985, 1986), commonly referred to as *identification, individuation*, and *integration*. Identification describes the process of relating to admired individuals, groups, or cultures and taking on some of their characteristics. As it relates to music, identification could involve using music in the same way as one's admired parent by, for example, listening to music in one's downtime to promote relaxation. As such, identification is responsible for a sense of belonging with others, particularly in one's salient social and cultural groups, what Erikson termed social identity. Through the processes of individuation, individuals also develop a sense of continuity across contexts, in terms of personal characteristics, such as beliefs and goals, as well as continuity across time. These aspects of personal continuity—personal and ego identity—allow individuals to find distinction and similarity with others, including family and close friends (Sabatelli & Mazor, 1985). For instance, an adolescent who

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shares an interest in pop music with her friends may also enjoy classical music on her own. Finally, integration refers to organizing the characteristics derived through identification and individuation into a framework that comprises a continuous sense of self across the levels of social, personal, and ego identity (Erikson, 1968). Together, these processes implicate the importance of environment and social relations, because an individual's identity is defined in relation or contrast to elements in their surroundings. As such, identity formation needs to be understood as situated in a specific cultural space and time (Erikson, 1968; see also Hammack, 2008; McLean, 2008).

One of the first empirical articulations of Erikson's theory was Marcia's (1980) model, in which he proposed two independent processes of identity development—*exploration* and *commitment*. Exploration refers to a process of examination and discovery while searching for a renewed sense of self; commitment reflects the degree to which one adheres to a set of beliefs or a course of action (Marcia, 1988). Exploring possible identities increases the probability that the identity to which one eventually commits will receive approval from society and satisfy the needs of the individual (Grotevant, 1987; Schwartz, Mullis, Waterman, & Dunham, 2000). In turn, commitment to an identity improves one's ability to navigate life's obstacles successfully (Bosma, 1992; Schwartz et al., 2000).

Marcia's (1980) framework provides four dimensions labeled identity *achievement, moratorium, foreclosure*, and *diffusion* (for reviews see Schwartz, 2001; Meeus, 2011; Schwartz, Luyckx, & Crocetti, 2014). A person who has committed to an identity (p.250) after extensively exploring a variety of possibilities is said to have an "achieved" status. Achieved individuals are considered the most mature because they demonstrate balanced thinking, effective decision-making skills, and strong social relationships (Orlofsky, Marcia, & Lesser, 1973; Boyes & Chandler, 1992; Marcia, 1993). Those with achieved musical identities have likely considered a broad array of genres, but having adequately explored, settle on a smaller range of genres with which they identify more deeply. Someone who has *not* committed to an identity but is undergoing the exploration process is said to be in "moratorium." People with this status often experience heightened stress and uncertainty (Kidwell, Dunham, Bacho,

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Pastorino, & Portes, 1995), because they are still considering what is personally relevant and representative of the self, and therefore lack the protective factors afforded by a committed identity (Erikson, 1968). Erikson (1956) considered a stage of moratorium as a normative precursor to identity achievement (for a contemporary revision, see Luyckx et al., 2008). In the case of music, individuals in this stage are likely to expose themselves to a broad range of genres beyond those present in their immediate environments.

Individuals who have committed to an identity without having explored alternatives, typically due to close identification with parents or peers, are said to have a “foreclosed” status. Youth in this category tend to resist change and to be closed-minded (Marcia, 1967) and would simply model their music preferences based on their family’s or friends’ tastes. Lastly, an individual who has not committed to an identity, or even engaged in the exploration process, is considered to have a “diffused” identity. This category is related to apathy, disinterest, and a lack of agency (Marcia, 1980). Individuals with a diffused musical identity would not assign much importance to music in their lives, typically listening to music only when it is being played by someone else (e.g., in a store, at a friend’s house). Compared with individuals in the foreclosed or diffused stages, those in the achieved and moratorium stages tend to process information from multiple sources and to generate judgments about which they feel confident (Read, Adams, & Dobson, 1984; Berzonsky, 1989). Although the four dimensions are often considered to represent mutually exclusive categories, they can vary independently, such that someone whose identity status is primarily achieved may also exhibit signs of a moratorium, foreclosure, or diffused status.

Berzonsky (1989, 1990) developed a model of identity development centered on individual differences in processing styles. He posited distinct cognitive orientations, or identity *styles*, that reflect individual differences in approaches to assessing, structuring, revising, and using self-relevant information. Individuals with an *informational* style tend to be more vigilant in decision-making and to show higher levels of self-esteem, conscientiousness, and openness-to-experience (Berzonsky, 1992; Berzonsky & Ferrari, 1996; Nurmi, Berzonsky, Tammi, & Kinney, 1997). This style is believed to form the foundation for achievement and moratorium statuses

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(Berzonsky, 1989). By contrast, a *normative* style is associated with conforming to the expectations of significant others, particularly close friends and family (Berzonsky, 2003). The normative style is characterized by structure, rigidity, and close-mindedness (Berzonsky & Sullivan, 1992) and is related to a foreclosed identity status (Berzonsky & Neimeyer, 1994; Schwartz (p.251) et al., 2000). Finally, a *diffuse-avoidant* identity style is characterized by delaying, procrastinating, and avoiding identity conflicts as long as possible (Berzonsky, 2004). Consequently, self-relevant decisions and behavior become highly dependent on situational factors, which explains its link to the diffusion-identity status.

To review, Erikson's psychosocial model argues that adolescence and emerging adulthood are critical time periods for the development of one's identity, which is nevertheless a lifelong process. Erikson claimed that cognitive advances and an evolving social environment provide adolescents and emerging adults with an opportunity to explore and evaluate a variety of identities. Some of his notions of identity development were expanded by Marcia, who emphasized the components of exploration and commitment as key developmental mechanisms in identity formation. Berzonsky further developed these models by identifying more stable and unique social-cognitive processing styles that underlie the formation of each identity status and are related to broader personality characteristics. Considered jointly, these approaches provide valuable insight into the ways in which individuals arrive at a sense of identity, and how these changes are associated with environmental factors, social-cognitive mechanisms, and individual differences in personality.

14.2 Musical identities

The remaining goals of the present chapter are to determine:

- Whether musical identities parallel identity formation in general.
- Whether the concepts described in the preceding section, particularly identity statuses and processing styles, provide a useful framework for understanding the formation of musical identities.

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As with identity statuses in general, musical identities can fit into one of Marcia's four statuses. To illustrate, musical identities can be achieved, such as when individuals have listened to a variety of music genres and know clearly which ones they like, such as, say, jazz and alternative. A moratorium musical identity refers to individuals who are still trying to figure out whether they like, say, pop or classical music, or both. Individuals with a foreclosed musical identity simply like the music that their parents or friends like. Finally, a diffused musical identity characterizes individuals who have thought little about what kind of music they like and who consider music to be relatively unimportant to their life and self-concept.

If identity statuses in the musical domain are a marker of identity formation in general, individual differences in Berzonsky's processing styles should correspond as they do in non-musical domains, with an information-orientation style predicting achievement and moratorium musical identities, a normative orientation predicting a foreclosed identity, and a diffuse orientation predicting a diffused identity. By (p.252) contrast, if musical identities reflect statuses that are distinct from identity development in general, such associations should be weak or non-existent. Individual differences in music preferences and personality are also likely to play a role in musical identities.

We will now report results from an empirical study that was designed to determine whether musical identities are associated with preferences for different genres of music, and if so, whether the concept of musical identity adds valuable information beyond that provided by preferences. Because liking for some music genres (e.g., classical) is certain to be associated with liking for other genres (e.g., opera), we begin by asking about the dimensional structure of music preferences, whether the solution we find replicates those reported previously in the literature (Rentfrow, Goldberg, & Levitin, 2011), and whether music preferences in general vary as a function of the particular population that is sampled, and as a function of individual differences within samples. We also consider personality characteristics that have been linked previously to an information-processing style (Nurmi et al., 1997; Schwartz, 2001) and to music preferences (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). Finally, we examine the role that performing music plays in musical identities and music preferences.

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Musically trained individuals are likely to have increased exposure to different genres of music (e.g., exposure to classical music in formal lessons in addition to exposure to pop music in everyday life), which should enhance consideration of self-identifying with different genres and the maturation of musical identities (Marcia, 1980).

14.3 Present study

As a means to test the hypotheses described above, we recruited 330 first-year undergraduate students from two university campuses. One campus (University of Toronto Mississauga [UTM]; 189 students; 24% white) was located in an ethnically diverse suburb situated next to the largest city in Canada. The other campus (Western Washington University [WWU]; 141 students; 82% white) was located in a small, relatively homogenous American city that had many characteristics of a US college town. Students completed a measure of ego identity (Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status [OM-EIS]; Adams, Shea, & Fitch, 1979), which was adapted to quantify *musical* identity on four different scales (achieved, moratorium, foreclosed, and diffuse); a measure of processing styles related to *non-musical* identity (Identity Style Inventory [ISI3]; Berzonsky, 1992); a widely used measure of the big five dimensions of personality (Big Five Inventory [BFI]; John & Srivastava, 1999); a measure of self-concept clarity (Self-Concept Clarity Scale; Campbell, Trapnell, Heine, Katz, Lavallee, & Lehman, 1996); the Short Test of Music Preferences (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003) in a revised format (STOMP-R) that included 22 genres instead of the original 14; and a background questionnaire that asked about demographic characteristics and formal music lessons.

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(p.253) 14.3.1 Music preferences

We explored the dimensional structure of preferences for different genres of music, in order to reduce the number of genres to a manageable size for subsequent analysis and to determine whether the observed structure would be similar to those reported by Rentfrow and colleagues (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003; Rentfrow et al., 2011; Rentfrow et al. , 2012). Although a five-dimensional model was identified from ratings of actual musical excerpts (Rentfrow et al., 2011, Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013), the STOMP-R—with paper-and-pencil ratings of genre preferences—is not well suited to reproduce this solution. Accordingly, we conducted an exploratory principal component analysis. An orthogonal (varimax) rotation produced an interpretable seven-factor solution (based on eigenvalues >1), which accounted for 65.2% of the variance in the original 22 genres (see Table 14.1). We labeled our factors as *roots/retro* (bluegrass, blues, folk, funk, jazz, oldies), *rocker* (heavy metal, punk, rock), *rhythmic/urban* (rap/hip-hop, soul/R&B), *spiritual* (gospel, religious), *conservative* (classical, international/foreign, opera, soundtrack), *cool* (alternative, indie, dance/electronica), and *pop/country* (pop, country).

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Table 14.1 Principal components analysis of music preferences

Genre	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Bluegrass	**0.69**	0.17	–0.10	0.01	0.17	–0.09	0.11
Blues	**0.80**	0.11	0.04	0.09	0.08	0.01	–0.06
Folk	**0.69**	–0.02	–0.30	–0.01	0.00	0.15	0.14
Funk	**0.70**	0.21	0.20	0.11	0.03	0.15	–0.18
Jazz	**0.71**	–0.03	0.06	0.17	0.21	0.12	–0.16
Oldies	**0.58**	–0.02	–0.04	0.00	0.07	0.19	0.35
Heavy Metal	0.05	**0.75**	–0.16	0.10	0.02	–0.08	–0.33
Punk	0.11	**0.82**	0.08	–0.07	0.09	0.06	0.11
Rock	0.14	**0.74**	–0.10	–0.22	–0.04	0.23	0.09
Rap/Hip–Hop	–0.06	–0.01	**0.84**	–0.01	–0.12	0.00	0.03
Soul/R&B	0.03	–0.11	**0.79**	0.18	0.10	–0.04	0.07
Gospel	0.28	–0.05	0.09	**0.82**	0.05	0.00	0.06
Religious	0.00	–0.09	0.05	**0.88**	0.09	–0.02	0.15
Classical	0.40	0.14	–0.28	0.09	**0.49**	0.04	–0.25
Foreign/World	0.15	–0.11	0.15	0.27	**0.52**	0.34	–0.07
Opera	**0.43**	0.12	–0.06	0.18	**0.59**	–0.08	–0.07

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Genre	Factors						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Soundtrack	0.06	0.00	0.01	–0.06	**0.70**	0.04	0.25
Alternative	0.24	0.37	–0.34	–0.03	–0.08	**0.64**	0.12
Indie	0.35	0.32	–0.27	0.07	–0.07	**0.63**	–0.05
Dance/ Electronica	–0.03	–0.08	0.28	–0.08	0.29	**0.66**	–0.10
Pop	–0.07	0.03	0.38	0.02	0.34	0.10	**0.63**
Country	0.04	–0.02	–0.05	0.20	–0.06	–0.13	**0.75**

Note. Factor loadings >0.40 are in bold type. Extraction method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalization. Factors were labeled (1) roots/retro, (2) rocker, (3) rhythmic/urban, (4) spiritual, (5) conservative, (6) cool, and (7) pop-country.

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Although the seven-factor structure bears some similarities to the five-factor solution reported by Rentfrow et al. (2011), it also shows marked differences. Similarities include correspondences between the rocker and roots/retro factors and Rentfrow's *intense* (e.g., alternative, heavy metal) and *unpretentious* (e.g., bluegrass, country) factors, respectively. Notable differences include separate factors in the present solution for music that celebrates a belief in God (spiritual), for contemporary popular music that differs from conventional pop or rock forms (cool), and for rhythm-based music that is associated primarily with African American culture (rhythmic/urban). Jazz is also grouped with other traditional music genres instead of with the conservative genres, and pop and country music load onto the same factor, reflecting the blurred distinction between these genres that is exemplified in the music and chart-topping popularity of Taylor Swift.

Our interest in contextual influences motivated us to examine whether music preferences would be associated with campus and/or ethnicity, using dummy-coded variables (UTM = 0, WWU = 1; students of color = 0; white students = 1) as predictor variables and factor scores as outcome variables. Multiple regression analyses allowed us to determine whether there were differences between campuses that were independent of ethnicity, and conversely, whether there were ethnic differences that were independent of location. Results are summarized in Table 14.2. The unstandardized slopes represent differences between campuses or ethnicities in terms of *standard deviation*s on the factor scores (with the other variable held constant). Ethnic and/or campus differences were evident for six of the seven factors. Preferences for roots/retro and rocker genres were higher for white students than for students of color, preferences for spiritual and conservative genres were higher for students of color than for white students, preferences for cool genres were higher for students at WWU than at UTM, and preferences for rhythmic/urban genres were higher for students of color *and* for students at UTM. Examination of interactions between predictors revealed only one significant (p.254) finding—preferences for rocker genres were particularly high among white students at UTM. Perhaps being part of a minority group (white) at the local (campus) level motivated increased identification with genres exemplified by all-white (and all-male) bands, such as Bon Jovi, Metallica, and

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Green Day. For pop-country genres, preferences did not differ as a function of campus or ethnicity. In any event, these findings document that (p.255) preferences for different music genres vary depending on cultural environment and ethnic background, as a probable consequence of differential exposure to Western culture and music, and of different culture- and ethnic-based attitudes toward music.

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Table 14.2 Results from multiple regressions predicting preference factor scores from campus and ethnicity

	R	b	t	p
Roots/retro	0.23*			
Campus		0.23	10.72	0.087
Ethnicity		0.28*	20.13	0.034
Rocker	0.18*			
Campus		–0.10	–0.74	0.458
Ethnicity		0.40*	20.99	0.003
Rhythmic/urban	0.41*			
Campus		–0.34*	–20.72	0.007
Ethnicity		–0.59*	–40.71	< 0.000
Spiritual	0.19*			
Campus		–0.08	–0.63	0.532
Ethnicity		–0.33*	–20.42	0.016
Conservative	0.18*			
Campus		–0.09	–0.67	0.506
Ethnicity		–0.29*	–20.17	0.031
Cool	0.23*			

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	R	b	t	p
Campus		0.43*	30.18	0.002
Ethnicity		0.04	0.31	0.760
Pop/country	0.10			
Campus		0.14	10.03	0.302
Ethnicity		0.08	0.57	0.566

Note:

(*) $p < 0.05$.

Campus (0 = UTM, 1 = WWU) and ethnicity (0 = students of color, 1 = white students).

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Although the orthogonal solution guaranteed independence of the seven factors, factor scores could nevertheless correlate within campuses, and differently across (p.256) campuses. Indeed, at WWU, but not at UTM, preferences for roots/retro genres were associated negatively with preferences for rocker (r = –0.25) and pop/country (r = –0.21) genres, and preferences for rocker genres were associated negatively with preferences for cool genres (r = –0.23). In other words, compared with students at UTM, students at WWU had more extreme opinions about their likes and dislikes, with *higher* liking for one factor predicting *lower* liking for other factors. In one case, correlations were actually reversed across campuses. At WWU, as preferences for roots/retro genres increased, preferences for spiritual genres decreased (r = –0.21). At UTM, preferences for roots/retro and spiritual genres increased and decreased in tandem (r = 0.20). We speculate that the average student at the WWU campus tends to be fully embedded in popular Western culture, such that distinctions between different factors are particularly meaningful. By contrast, the high proportion of new Canadians at UTM probably means that these students tend to be less identified with Western culture in general, with less extreme views about different genres of Western music.

We also examined whether music preferences were associated with personality variables, as they have been in the past (e.g., Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, 2006). Because there were five personality variables and seven factors (i.e., 35 correlations), we discuss only those associations that were highly significant ($p \leq .005$) after controlling for campus and ethnic differences. The strongest association revealed that as scores on openness-to-experience increased, so did preferences for roots/retro genres (pr = 0.33). Openness was also associated positively with preferences for cool genres (pr = 0.16). Higher levels of extraversion were accompanied by increases in preferences for rhythmic/urban genres (pr = 0.21), and higher levels of agreeableness were accompanied by increases in preferences for spiritual genres (pr = 0.18). Because these associations were evident after accounting for campus and ethnicity, they highlight the role of individuation in participants' lives and confirm that characteristics of their personalities (e.g., being open and adventurous) are related to their music preferences, even beyond what one would expect based on their cultural contexts and ethnic background. The findings also confirm

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that preferences are influenced not only by broad social structures but also by individual differences within those structures. As in previous research (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003, 2006), openness to experience was the personality dimension most closely associated with music preferences.

To examine associations with performing music, we measured years of playing music regularly (square root transformed to correct skewness). This variable represents a combination of formal lessons, practice, and general engagement with music. Previous research confirmed that associations with music training tend to be maximized when measured in this manner (Schellenberg, 2006; Corrigall, Schellenberg, & Misura, 2013). Using the criteria above ($p \leq 0.005$ after controlling for campus and ethnic differences), we found that as duration of playing music increased, so did preferences for roots/retro genres ($pr = 0.24$). Although genre preferences were unrelated to self-concept clarity, we found associations with identity-processing styles (with other identity styles held constant in addition to campus and ethnicity). As information orientation increased, (p.257) preferences for roots/retro ($pr = 0.22$) and spiritual ($pr = 0.20$) genres increased, but preferences for pop/country genres decreased ($pr = –0.28$). As normative orientation increased, preferences for spiritual genres increased ($pr = 0.26$), but preferences for roots/retro genres decreased ($pr = –0.19$). In short, five of the seven music-factor scores were associated with identity formation in non-musical domains as measured by processing styles.

Finally, we considered all of the significant associations with genre preferences simultaneously, using all-subsets regression. This approach allowed us to identify parsimonious models (with only significant predictor variables) for each preference factor. Preferences for roots/retro genres were best explained by white ethnicity, higher levels of openness-to-experience, and longer duration of playing music regularly. Preferences for rocker genres were greater among white students, particularly those at UTM. Preferences for rhythmic/urban genres were greater among participants of color, participants at UTM, and participants with higher extraversion scores. Preferences for spiritual genres were greater among participants of color, participants who were more agreeable, and participants who scored relatively high on information-orientation and normative-orientation processing styles. Preferences for conservative genres were higher among

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participants of color. Preferences for cool genres were higher among WWU than UTM students, and among students with higher levels of openness-to-experience. Finally, preferences for pop/country genres were negatively associated with scores on the information-orientation processing style.

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14.3.2 Musical identities

Our measure of musical identities was formed by taking an established scale of identity statuses (Adams et al., 1979) and changing all items so that they pertained to music. For example, one item from the original scale that measured achieved identity—“It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what I want for a career”—was changed to “It took me a while to figure it out, but now I really know what types of music I like”. Foreclosure items were reworded in two ways—in relation to friends and in relation to parents.

In general, scores were highest for achievement status, followed by moratorium, diffusion, and then foreclosure status, with significant differences between each successive pair of means. This pattern was identical across campuses and ethnicities. It was not unexpected, however, given the age of our participants (emerging adults). In contrast to music preferences, which showed notable campus and ethnic differences, the four main identity statuses did not differ as a function of campus or ethnicity. When foreclosure status was considered separately for friends and parents, however, students of color were slightly more likely than white students to conform their tastes to those of their friends, while students at WWU were slightly more likely than UTM students to conform their tastes to those of their parents. Both associations were very weak (p.258) (p.259) ($p = 0.05$), however, and not easily interpretable, so campus and ethnicity were not considered further in relation to musical-identity statuses.

In order to test whether participants’ musical-identity statuses were associated with identity formation in other domains, we regressed each identity status on the three processing styles. An information orientation had a significant partial correlation with achievement status ($pr = 0.12$), and a normative orientation had a partial correlation with foreclosure status ($pr = 0.16$), whether it was measured in relation to parents or to friends. These results are consistent with theory and previous findings (Berzonsky & Adams, 1999; Schwartz et al., 2000). The different processing styles individuals use to deal with the challenges and opportunities of their environments are related to their musical identities, much in the same way as they are to their broader identities. Nevertheless, the associations were

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small in magnitude, which confirms that musical identities are not simply a reflection of identity formation in nonmusical domains.

Next, we sought to investigate how music preferences are related to musical identities. We ran multiple regression analyses, with all seven music-preference factor scores predicting each of the musical-identity statuses. Results are summarized in Table 14.3. The regression model was not significant for achievement status and none of the preference scores made a significant unique contribution to the model, although preferences for (p.260) conservative genres came very close. Greater preferences for conservative genres were associated with slightly *lower* scores on achievement status for musical identities. For moratorium status, however, the model was highly significant and preferences for roots/retro, rhythmic/urban, conservative, and pop/country genres all had significant and positive partial associations with moratorium scores. In other words, individuals who preferred these genres were still in the process of exploring a musical identity.

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Table 14.3 Results from multiple regressions predicting musical-identity status from music-preference factor scores

	R	b	t	p
Achieved	0.17			
Roots/retro		0.02	0.27	0.785
Rocker		0.06	10.08	0.282
Rhythmic/urban		–0.04	–0.74	0.458
Spiritual		0.01	0.12	0.903
Conservative		–0.11	–10.95	0.052
Cool		0.06	10.05	0.294
Pop/country		–0.10	–10.73	0.086
Moratorium	0.38*			
Roots/retro		0.18*	20.77	0.006
Rocker		0.08	10.21	0.228
Rhythmic/urban		0.23*	30.59	<0.001
Spiritual		–0.09	–10.35	0.177
Conservative		0.18*	20.80	0.005
Cool		0.09	10.44	0.150
Pop/country		0.28*	40.31	<0.001

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	R	b	t	p
Foreclosed (friends)	0.28*			
Roots/retro		–0.16*	–20.94	0.004
Rocker		–0.04	–0.72	0.473
Rhythmic/urban		0.20*	30.59	<0.001
Spiritual		–0.05	–0.83	0.407
Conservative		0.01	0.19	0.851
Cool		–0.09	–10.66	0.099
Pop/country		–0.01	–0.10	0.921
Foreclosed (adults)	0.31*			
Roots/retro		0.13*	20.67	0.008
Rocker		–0.13*	–20.75	0.006
Rhythmic/urban		–0.11*	–20.35	0.020
Spiritual		0.13*	20.82	0.005
Conservative		–0.01	–0.13	0.895
Cool		–0.08	–10.63	0.104
Pop/country		0.05	10.03	0.305
Diffused	0.38*			
Roots/retro		0.03	0.47	0.642

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R	b	t	p
Rocker	0.02	0.28	0.778
Rhythmic/urban	0.32*	40.73	<0.001
Spiritual	0.03	0.44	0.658
Conservative	0.23*	30.26	0.001
Cool	–0.01	–0.18	0.855
Pop/country	0.30*	40.37	<0.001

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Foreclosure scores showed different patterns whether it was measured in relation to parents or to friends. In both cases, the model was significant. Foreclosure scores in relation to friends increased as preferences for rhythmic/urban genres increased and as preferences for roots/retro genres decreased. Scores in relation to parents tended to increase as preferences for roots/retro and spiritual genres increased, and as preferences for rocker and rhythmic/urban genres decreased. Considered jointly, preferences for roots/retro genres involved identifying with one's parents' musical tastes and distancing oneself from friends' preferences, but preferences for rhythmic/urban genres involved identifying with peers and distancing from parents.

Finally, the regression model had robust predictive power for diffusion-identity scores. Strong and positive partial associations were evident with preferences for rhythmic/urban, conservative, and pop/country genres. These results imply that many individuals who liked these genres did not seek to form a musical identity, and/or they did not consider music to be an important part of their self-concept.

The next analyses tested whether musical identities were associated with individual differences in personality, self-concept clarity, and music training. For personality, two associations emerged that appeared to be reliable. One indicated that as levels of agreeableness increased, so did scores on foreclosure status in relation to parents ($pr = 0.16$). The other indicated that as openness-to-experience increased, foreclosure status in relation to friends decreased ($pr = –0.20$). Both of these associations were calculated with the other four personality dimensions held constant. These findings indicate that those who were high in agreeableness were particularly *likely* to have musical identities that conformed to those of their parents, whereas those who were high in openness were particularly *unlikely* to have musical identities that conformed to those of their friends.

In order to gauge whether individuals' musical-identity statuses were associated with their self-understanding in general, we predicted scores for self-concept clarity from the four statuses using multiple regression. Clarity of self-concept tended to be relatively low among participants with higher scores on moratorium ($pr = –0.19$) and friend foreclosure ($pr =$

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–0.12) musical identities. Because participants who were high in moratorium had yet to commit to a musical identity, it is understandable that they lacked a clear understanding of themselves, as they were still actively exploring in the hopes of defining their identities. Those who identified with the same musical interests as their friends demonstrated a similar lack of self-understanding: individuals do not need a clear sense of self simply to like music that their friends like.

We also predicted active experience with music from the identity statuses using multiple regression. As duration of playing music regularly increased, foreclosed status in relation to friends decreased (pr = –0.18). In other words, participants with more (p.261) experience playing music were less likely to have musical identities that conformed to the tastes of their friends.

The final analyses sought to determine which combination of variables best predicts musical identities, considering all of the associations identified above. As with music preferences, all-subsets regression was used to derive models that had only significant predictors. The results revealed that achieved musical identities increased as information-orientation processing style increased, and as preferences for conservative genres decreased. Moratorium identities were best explained as a combination of five variables. Specifically, higher moratorium identities were evident among participants with greater preferences for roots/retro, conservative, rhythmic/urban, and pop/country genres, and among participants with relatively unclear self-concepts. Foreclosed identities based on friends' tastes were higher among participants with greater preferences for rhythmic/urban genres of music and lower scores on openness-to-experience. Foreclosed identities based on parents' tastes were more likely to be evident among participants with higher normative-orientation processing styles, agreeable participants, participants who preferred roots/retro genres, and participants who did *not* like rhythmic-urban genres. Finally, diffuse musical identities tended to increase as preferences for conservative, rhythmic/urban, and pop/country genres increased.

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14.4 Discussion and conclusions

We began by discussing the challenge of identity formation that faces adolescents and emerging adults, and how music is an important part of their identities. We also noted that to date, the concept of a musical identity has largely been equated with music preferences. By borrowing the notion of an ego-identity status from Marcia, we argued that considering one's identity status—a function of exploration and commitment to an identity—in the music domain may yield insight into identity formation beyond music preferences. Adopting this framework allowed us to better understand how individuals come to form music preferences through interactions with their surroundings. This approach integrated efforts to identify how musical identities function in relation to group processes (Tarrant et al., 2002) and individual differences (e.g., Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). Moreover, we identified a complex association between individual differences (e.g., personality and processing styles), and cultural factors (e.g., ethnicity and geographical location) in the formation of music preferences and musical identities, and confirmed the importance of studying these individual- and group-level phenomena jointly.

Do psychological constructs related to personal commitment improve our understanding of musical identities above and beyond music preferences? Although a definitive answer remains unclear, the findings reported here clarify that liking certain genres is not the same thing as a personal commitment to some genres. For example, music preferences varied across campuses and ethnicity, but musical identities did not. The (p.262) dimensional structure of music preferences also appears to vary based on the historical and cultural context (i.e., different in the present sample than in previous reports), but musical identities are unlikely to show similar patterns. Music preferences were also more closely associated with personality variables and, surprisingly, with identity-processing styles. In other words, identity formation in non-musical domains is more closely associated with preferences for different music genres than it is with a personal commitment and identification with any genre.

Associations between musical identities (especially moratorium and diffusion) and music preferences were particularly interesting. Although liking classical music is

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typically considered to be a marker of sophistication (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003; Rentfrow et al., 2011), our results suggest otherwise. Specifically, preferences for conservative genres were indicative of a lack of interest in music, or at least of identifying closely with any music genres, and of searching but not yet formulating a musical identity. Preferences for pop/country and rhythmic/urban genres showed a similar association with diffused musical identities, with pop/country being additionally associated with decreases in an information-orientation processing style.

In the present samples, one could argue that the most sophisticated listeners were:

- Those who preferred cool genres and tended to score high on openness-to- experience.
- Individuals who preferred roots/retro music, who, in addition to scoring high on openness, exhibited high levels of an information-orientation processing style, a longer duration of playing music regularly, greater independence from their friends' musical tastes, but greater conformity with their parents' tastes.

To summarize, whether researchers choose to measure music preferences, musical identities, or both depends on the questions they have and the particular associations that are hypothesized to be evident.

In future research, we suggest that efforts be made to consider additional dimensions of musical identities, to build upon what we know from music preferences. We also encourage additional study of factors that promote identity formation. For instance, we have shown that music training promotes exploration among music genres, but what leads to identity commitment in light of exploration remains unclear. As such, it may be worthwhile to consider a broader array of psychological constructs (e.g., attachment) in conjunction with previous variables of interest (e.g., reasons for listening to music) in order to reach a more complete understanding of musical identities.

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