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# How Young Adults Make Meaning of Their Family Intergenerational Solidarity Through the Use of Music

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Running Head: FAMILY SOLIDARITY THROUGH USE OF MUSIC

How Young Adults Make Meaning of Their Family Intergenerational  
Solidarity Through The Use of Music

by

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M.S., Antioch University New England

DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Psychology in the Department of Clinical Psychology  
at Antioch University New England, 2014

Keene, New Hampshire



Department of Clinical Psychology

**DISSERTATION COMMITTEE PAGE**

The undersigned have examined the dissertation entitled:

**HOW YOUNG ADULTS MAKE MEANING OF THEIR FAMILY  
INTERGENERATIONAL SOLIDARITY THROUGH MUSIC**

presented on April 10, 2014

by

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**Dedication**

To my dogs Sadie, Smudge, and Bailey, and I suppose my parents and brother as well.

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## Abstract

This qualitative research project explores how young adults make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music. The project employed a type of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) to unlock meaning-making themes among young adults. Data collection consisted of interviewing ten young adults whose family had unintentionally or intentionally used music to increase their family intergenerational solidarity. The interviews were semi-structured. This study attempted to capture the depth of each young adult's meaning-making. Seven general themes emerged: (a) I have experienced bonding with my family members through the use of music; (b) I have experienced emotional and/or psychological change through the use of music; (c) I have experienced the transmission (up, down, or laterally) of musical preference and/or talent among family members, (d) I have had a strong emotional experience with music (SEM) in the presence of my family; (e) I have experienced the bonding of my family members over a musical performance and/or with the use of a musical instrument; (f) I have experienced music triggering the recollection of family memories; and (g) I found music to be meaningful during a holiday(s), tradition(s), or religious or cultural experience(s). The first theme, I have experienced bonding with my family members through the use of music, sets the scene for those which follow. The six following themes represent six ways in which the young adults obtained the first theme: greater cohesion with family members of different generations through the use of music. All ten of the young adults experienced the strengthening of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music.

*Keywords:* Music, Family Intergenerational Solidarity, Young Adults



How Young Adults Make Meaning of Their Family Intergenerational Solidarity  
Through The Use of Music

This qualitative study examines how young adults (ages 20-30) make meaning about their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music. This section introduces the study by offering a brief background of the use of music and the concept of intergenerational solidarity setting the stage for discovering the process by which young adults make meaning of their family through the use of music.

Music has been around since the start of civilization and has played an integral role in human life (Mistic, Arandjelovic, Stanojkovic, Vladejic, & Mladenovic, 2010). Music has been referred to as a universal language, an acoustic phenomenon, a symbolic medium (Stige, 2002), and an agent of change (Slaboda, 1992). Music arrives through various forms, such as through the assortment of technological devices (e.g., MP3 players, the radio), media (e.g., movies, television), celebrations (e.g., cultural holidays, birthday parties), or even daily rituals (e.g., the morning salute, the ABC's). Today on average, American adolescents listen to approximately four and a half hours of music per day (Leming, 1987). With the invention of new technologies such as the Ipod, Mp3 players, and other ways of digitally downloading music, the amount of music people listen to per day has universally increased (Campbell, Connell, & Beegle, 2007).

Over time, music has garnered a great deal of attention, and thus, research on music (Stige, 2002). There is a great deal of scientific research that has explored music's influence on emotions, memories, interpersonal relationships, biological responses and sensations, and a variety of psychological and physical disorders. However, literature on meaning-making through the use of music is sparse. Even more sparse is literature on how young adults use music to make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity.

Whether during a holiday activity or created by an instrument practiced in the house, music plays a significant role in families. As McGoldrick and Carter (2002) state, “family is, except in rare circumstances, the most important emotional system we ever belong to” because it “shapes and continues to determine the course and outcome of our lives” (p. 283). Music often serves as a common denominator among family members due to its accessibility, aesthetically pleasing quality, and its function as a tool for communication and relating. A common denominator is a feature shared by all members of the group and can be used to bring together people who are otherwise very different. Some families use music more than others and the term music may mean one thing to one family and something different to the next family. However, I presume that most people are able to say that music has played at least a minor role in their lives and within their family. The difference between how families utilize music raises a variety of questions. Why is it that some families (consciously or unconsciously) use music to strengthen their intergenerational solidarity? What meaning do young adults make about their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music? How do young adults use music within their family to create psychological or emotional change? Did music play a large role in the change in family structure and roles over the last several decades? This study explores the meaning that young adults made of their family intergenerational solidarity—or family cohesion—through the use of music.

### **The Project’s Position**

Music plays a role in almost everyone’s life and can be conceptualized as the common dominator through which people, particularly family members, relate. My interest lies in how young adults make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music.

Family intergenerational solidarity refers to the cohesion between family members of different generations.

Researchers have found that the relationship between parents and their children has strengthened over the last several decades. Music may be one reason for why intergenerational solidarity has increased. Music appears to strengthen intergenerational solidarity by facilitating the development of a strong emotional bond. This emotional bond is created by communication through music, specifically the expression of emotions and feelings that are not able to be communicated otherwise. In addition, these bonds are strengthened by deep-rooted memories created when an event is paired with a musical piece. The memory is then evoked each time the song is heard or discussed, which in turn strengthens the connection. Third, when music evokes emotions among family members in the presence of one another, it creates a shared emotional experience (SEE). This SEE creates a bond that strengthens a family's intergenerational solidarity. In addition, this SEE can be coded into memory and evoked every time the musical piece is heard, thus, strengthening the bond, emotional experience, and memory.

### **Summary of the Paper**

This paper utilizes a qualitative approach, specifically an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, Larkin, & Flowers, 2009) informed approach to data analysis to unlock meaning-making themes among young adults who used music in their family. The following provides a summary of the history of and relevant research on music. Music has played an integral role in human life (Misic, Arandjelovic, Stanojkovic, Vladejic, & Mladenovic 2010) and has shown to have a positive impact on a variety of psychological, biological, and spiritual factors (Clements-Cortes, 2004; Kneafsey, 1997; Wuthnow, 2003). This paper then examines the concept family intergenerational solidarity. After that, the new

developmental stage termed *young adults* is explored. This developmental stage is only beginning to be investigated, however, the research and literature is growing rapidly. The research that does exist indicate that young adults today have stronger family intergenerational solidarity, especially with their parents, due to having more common interests and open communication (Straus, 2009a). In the following section, I describe how music was used within her family to strengthen my family intergenerational solidarity. Next, a description of the methods used in this study is described. Ten young adults were interviewed. Interviews were analyzed, and seven general themes emerged from each interview. Chapter 4 demonstrates the study's findings and Chapter 5 discusses those findings.

## Chapter 2

### Introduction to Music

The conventional dictionary definition of music is "the art of combining sounds of voices or instruments to achieve beauty of form and expression of emotion." (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). Music has been used within psychotherapeutic and medical settings, as a social and communicative tool, and within traditional healing rituals. Most frequently, it is used as a pleasurable and aesthetically pleasing activity. Music is a pervasively intimate tool (Bessett, 2006) that is more fundamental than any other media (Frith, 2002). A large sample by Rentfrow and Gosling (2003) found that music is one of peoples' favorite and most enduring past-times. Today in the U.S., adolescents on average are listening to approximately 4.5 hours of music per day (Leming, 1987). People are provided different options for how they want to experience music, whether through concerts, MP3 players, music videos, or the radio. These devices and formats allow people to listen to music anywhere at any time. The International Federation of Phonographic Industry (n.d.) argues that the amount that people listen to music is only partially represented in terms of commerce but not completely. For example, there are many ways people listen to music that are not financially represented (e.g., illegal downloads through the internet). Although music is not fully represented in terms of commerce, the whole music industry was valued at \$130 billion in 2006 (International Federation of the Phonographic Industry, n.d.).

It only makes sense that because of the popularity of music, the research on it is vast. In the following section, a summary of the history of music is presented. Following the history of music, a brief overview of the scientific research on music, the concept of family intergenerational solidarity, and my biographical account are described.

### **Brief History of Music**

Music has been used as a therapeutic tool since ancient times and has continued to do so over the centuries within all different cultures (Nelson & Weathers, 1998). The Neanderthals are believed to have engaged in musical activities over 30,000 years ago. In primitive societies, music was believed to have divine significance and the power to restore harmony and health (Misic et al., 2010). Music played a large role in priest-practitioners' powers and was often used in conjunction with dances to heal illnesses and wounds perceived to have originated from magico-religious forces (Misic et al., 2010). The Hebrews recorded several uses for music, including the treatment of emotional or spiritual ailments such as the time when David played the harp for King Saul to help absolve his sadness (Nelson & Weathers, 1998).

The Greeks, as early as 400 B.C., used music in conjunction with medicine and oral expressions as an early form of psychosomatic medicine (Munro & Mount, 1978). Pythagoras postulated that the use of music in a prescribed manner within one's daily life would enhance one's physical and spiritual health (Munro & Mount, 1978). Aristotle believed in "psychocatharsis"—the purging or purifying one's emotions through music (Munro & Mount, 1978). Homer postulated that the use of music counterbalanced negative feeling states such as anger, sorrow, and emotional fatigue (Nelson & Weathers, 1998). Even Hippocrates, Greek father of medicine, played music for his patients suffering from mental disorders (Antrim, 2006; Wilgram, Pederson, & Bonde, 2002).

By the 13th century, Arab hospitals contained music-rooms for the emotional and physical benefit of the patients (Antrim, 2006). During medieval times, there were three distinctions between the experiences of music. *Musica mundana* symbolized the spiritual level that provided individuals with the experience of the deepest and most universal truths. *Musica*

*humana* is the level of the soul and the mind which is where the moral and ethical potential unfolds. *Musica instrumentalis* represents the physical level of the body where the music is “heard” (Wilgram et al., 2002). These three levels of musical experience are equally important and can still be found in all major cultures (Ruud, 1990). In the United States, Native American medicine men used chants and dance as methods of healing patients (Antrim, 2006). During the Renaissance, research on anatomy and the cause-and-effect phenomenon began to take rise which facilitated research on music’s influence on breathing, blood pressure, muscular activity and digestion (Munro & Mount, 1978).

The earliest reference to the use of music as a treatment appeared in 1798 in *Columbian Magazine* titled “Music Physically Considered” (AMTA, 1998). In the 1800s, two medical dissertations were written that explored the therapeutic value of music. One dissertation was the first recorded music therapy intervention that occurred in an institutional setting, and the second dissertation was the first recorded systematic experiment which examined the use of music to alter dream states during psychotherapy (AMTA, 1998). By the end of the 18th century, scientists had begun research on music’s influence on a variety of different functions (i.e., cardiac output, respiratory rate, pulse rate, circulation, blood pressure, and electrical conduction on tissues), on fatigue, and on general vibratory effects on the body (Antrim, 2006).

Music was integrated into a formal treatment in hospital settings after the First and Second World Wars (American Music Therapy Association [AMTA], 1998; Krumhansl, 2000). Originally, doctors and nurses requested the hiring of musicians after they noticed improvements in symptoms among their patients that listened to music, thus speeding the recovery process (AMTA, 1998). Around this time, researchers began to study the effects of music on psychological and emotional reactions. Eventually, the use of music as a treatment grew into a

field that required prior training and education (AMTA, 1998). The first music therapy academic training program was created at Michigan State University in 1944, with many other universities to follow (AMTA, 1998). In the 1950s, the National Association for Music Therapy (NAMT) was founded. This was the first association to succeed by “creating a constitution of bylaws, developing standards for university-level education and clinical training requirements, and publishing research and clinical journals” (AMTA, 1998, p. 1). NAMT operated from 1950 to 1997. The American Association for Music Therapy (AAMT) was established in 1971. These two associations eventually merged with NAMT in 1998 to create AMTA (AMTA, 1998). By the 1980s, music therapy was being taught to a large number of people in universities and is still currently being used as a therapeutic tool in a variety of settings throughout the world (AMTA, 1998).

### **Current Scientific Research**

There has been a great deal of research on the effects that music has on the human psyche and physical body. In the following section, a review of the literature on music’s effects on memories, emotions, social behavior, identity and culture, and physical and psychological disorders is provided. In addition, a description of group music therapy, spirituality and music, and how one’s social environment affects the emotion(s) experienced when listening to music is described.

**Memories.** There has been a large amount of research examining music’s effects on the brain, particularly its effect on memories. The link between music and memories is strong and deeply rooted (Clements-Cortes, 2004). Listening to a specific song can both consciously and unconsciously evoke a time, place, or emotional state, transporting an individual to the event where the song was originally heard (Nelson & Weathers, 1998).



Baumgartner (1992) examined why types of autobiographical memories are triggered by music. He concluded that many of the memories evoked by music involved relationships with past or present lovers or experiences with family and friends. Baumgartner also found a strong correlation between the participants' evaluation of the music and their evaluation of the autobiographical event. He found participants' affective perception of the experience corresponded to the feelings induced by hearing the piece of music. Another study which was conducted by Holbrook and Schindler (1989) found that individuals tended to express the strongest liking for music that was popular when they were in their early twenties. This may be because there are a great deal of emotionally powerful events (e.g., such as school dances, college, romantic relationships, social gatherings) that occur during early adulthood.

**Emotions.** Research has found that music has been shown to influence moods and stimulate the senses (Clements-Cortes, 2004). Individuals use music as a nonverbal catalyst of feelings, evoking emotional responses which release memories and facilitate the expression of pleasant and negative feelings (Clements-Cortes, 2004). Emotions are strongly influenced by music because music provides a safe field or transitional object (Winnicott, 1958) in which an individual can play out and work through emotional issues (Salmon, 1993). Another possibility regarding why emotions are evoked through music is because music "provides symbolic images both as substantive psychological content that can be explored, and as clinical process, which facilitates the deepening of experiences" (Nelson & Weathers, 1998, p. 101). Sherer and Zentner (2007) postulate that the emotion experienced by music depends on the structural features of the song, the features of the performance, the listener's features, and the contextual features.

Music has been shown to (a) induce pleasurable emotional responses (Egermann, Sutherland, Grewe, Nagal, Kopiez, & Altenmuller, 2011); (b) decrease depressive symptoms,

anxiety, and social isolation (Munro & Mount, 1978); (c) increase communication and self-expression (Salmon, 1993); and (d) enhance relaxation (Salmon, 1993). Music also assists in the regulation of emotions, the acknowledgement of unfelt or unconscious emotions (Munro & Mount, 1978), and the processing and expression of painful and difficult-to-express emotions (Salmon, 1993). Music has also been shown to facilitate the emotional expression and exploration of loss and grief with the terminally ill (Clements-Cortes, 2004). Furthermore, it can serve as a distraction and relaxation technique for those who have difficulty self-regulating their emotions (Behne, 1997).

**Music's influence on social behavior.** People listen to music in a variety of settings (North, Hargreaves, & Hargreaves, 2004) and tend to use it as a conversation starter when meeting new people (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2006). Humans are routinely exposed to musical “behavior” in one way or another (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006). Music is used to create or strengthen bonds and social connections (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006), renegotiate relationships (Arnett, 1995), communicate information about values, and facilitate social attraction (Boer, Fischer, Strack, Bond, Lo, & Lam, 2011). Music is often used as a means of socially acceptable self-expression and is used as a bridge across cultural differences and/or isolation (Munro & Mount, 1978). Merriam (1964) refers to music as a “universal behavior” because it is a unifying force that brings people of different backgrounds, age groups, and social groups together because it is something everyone can identify with.

**Identity and culture.** Music has an influence on the development of a self-identity, the construction of values, and the communication of both of these. Music also provides possibilities to experience mastery, agency, and self-control through self-directed activities.

These activities have been shown to improve subjective well-being and mental health (Arnett, 1995).

There is empirical evidence suggesting that music preferences are associated with personality traits (Rentfrow & Gosling, 2003). For example, Djikic (2011) found that music produces significant increases, and lyrics significant decreases, in the short-term self-reported experience of change of one's personality traits. One study psychometrically assessed why people use music in their everyday life. They found that neuroticism is positively correlated with emotional use of music, extraversion is positively correlated with background use of music, and openness to experiences is positively correlated with intellectual or cognitive use of music (Chamorro-Premuzic, Goma-i-Freixanet, Furnaham, & Muro, 2009). Individuals also tend to use music to develop and construct their self-identity, as well as a "social badge", or tool that communicates these values to others (Boer et al., 2011; Merriam, 1964). People's musical preference represents value-expressive attitudes and self-affirmative expressions that convey values and identity relevant information to others (Katz, 1960).

Individuals tend to use music to convey personality traits and value orientations as evidenced by the various "music-communities" (Merriam, 1964). The rap and country community are among the most well known music-communities that use music as an open forum to communicate values, feelings, and opinions as well as to bring their community closer together. Communication through rap music occurs with the symbolic meanings which are tacitly agreed upon by the members of the music-community (Merriam, 1964). Rap is a cultural expression that prioritizes urban voices from the margins of America and provides urban individuals a means of storytelling accompanied by highly rhythmic, electronically-based music (Rose, 1994).

According to Merriam (1964), music serves to facilitate cross-cultural communication, reflects the organization of society and culture, and provides the means to understanding people and their behaviors. Songs and their lyrics offer a window into understanding cultural changes in psychological states (DeWall, Pond Jr., Campbell, & Twenge, 2011) and can be used as such. For example, the Beatles, who had a tremendous impact on culture around the world, showed a great deal of changes in their musical styles over time, representing cross-cultural, within cultural, and within-person changes (DeWall et al., 2011).

**Music uses for physical and psychological disorders.** The most extensive research appears to be on the influences of music on physical and psychological disorders. Music appears to have the ability to penetrate both the mind and the body, regardless of the individual's intelligence or condition (Kneafsey, 1997). Music has been found to be effective in the reduction of chronic pain (Munro & Mount, 1978), symptoms from a stroke (Nayak, 2000), pain associated with childbirth (Livingston, 1979), and blood pressure (Bradt & Dileo, 2009). In Africa, music is used to reduce pain after male and female circumcision, bone setting, or any type of traditional surgery. Music has been shown to be effective in the treatment of neurodegenerative disorders such as Parkinson's (Kneafsey, 1997) and dementia specifically Alzheimer's disease (Kneafsey, 1997); drug and alcohol addiction; a variety of mental illnesses and personality disorders, learning disabilities and mental retardation; speech disorders (Munro & Mount, 1978); and psycho-somatic diseases (Kneafsey, 1997).

**The influence social environment has on emotions experienced when listening to music.** The only research conducted on this found that the social context in which the music is heard influences the emotions experienced and expressed (Gabrielsson & Lindstrom Wik, 2003). Manstead and Fischer (2001) postulate that appraisals are often influenced by the social context

one is a part of, which they refer to as social appraisal. Social appraisal can happen two ways: (a) another person is part of the emotional event appraised or experienced, and (b) when we observe another's reactions to an emotional event (Manstead & Fischer, 2001).

Gabrielsson and Lindstrom Wik (2003) stated that adults can have strong experiences with music (SEM) and these SEMs occur most frequently in live concert settings with others being present. Gabrielsson and Lindstrom (1995) argue that SEMs may involve: (a) physical responses, (b) quasi-physical responses, (c) perceptual aspects, (d) cognitive transformation, (e) cognitive-emotional aspects, (f) emotional responses, and (g) transcendental and existential aspects. Physical responses include goosebumps/gooseflesh, shivers, changes in breathing or heart rate, various overt movements, tears in the eyes, or weeping. Quasi-physical responses include feeling weightless or like they are being carried away by the music. Perceptual aspects are related to various aspects of the music (e.g., timbre, rhythm, and melody), visual impressions of the performers, and tactile sensations. Cognitive transformations are described as a total concentration on the music, a lost awareness of time, space and one's own body, abandoning of analytic listening, and the experience of images/fantasies. Cognitive-emotional aspects include the experience of direct communication without barriers, clarification of one's own thoughts and feelings, and a sense of perfection. Emotional responses are described as experiences of joy and happiness; no matter one's background, the music affects everybody at the concert in the same emotional way (C. Swirsky, personal communication, November 24, 2008).

**Group Therapy.** Music has been well-received by hospitals throughout the world by the staff, patients, and their families (Munro & Mount, 1978). Many hospitals use music in a group format to increase positive interactions and bonding among individuals suffering from a variety of physical and psychological deficits and disorders (Nayak, Wheeler, Shiflett, & Agostinelli,

2000). This increased interpersonal support and communication helps lower isolation and helps in the recovery process. Furthermore, music is used to create a bond or sense of community with family members and others, past and present, through the mental associations aroused with music (Munro & Mount, 1978). Music is often able to provide comfort and support when words are inadequate or inappropriate (Munro & Mount, 1978). Music also serves as a link to the patient's life before the illness and may serve as a form of entertainment or distraction from the negative effects of the illness (Munro & Mount, 1978).

**Music and spirituality.** Music has played an integral role in religious communities around the world. Music is often used to deepen spirituality, so much so that people have reported that they felt closer to God when listening to music (Wuthnow, 2003). Indigenous cultures use music in healing practices as a means for transcendence, discovery, affirmation, treatment, and for communication across human and spiritual realms (Sonke, 2011). For example, Native American medicine men use chants and singing to gain access to the supernatural world (Sonke, 2011).

Within the United States, organized religion has been on the decline and many Americans no longer look to religion as a primary guide for structuring their lives (C. Swirsky, personal communication, November 24, 2008). Instead, Americans have been turning to fandom to fulfill their innate need for a spiritual meaning in life. For some, music fandom is a primary source for spiritual fulfillment and answers philosophical questions such as the meaning of life, death, sickness, youth, beauty, happiness, and of pain (Martin-Barbero, 1997). Fandom consists of four interrelated components that fulfill the requirements for a "popular religion, or religion that consists outside the boundaries of official traditions" (Sutton, 2000, p. 111). The four components of fandom are community, ritual behavior, creed (beliefs about the meaning of

human life), and code (the rules for which everyday behaviors are guided by that reflect creed). This allows individuals to also devote themselves to an official or another popular religion (C. Swirsky, personal communication, November 24, 2008).

Music has influenced many facets of human life and has been shown to positively affect physical and psychological well-being. From memories to the formation of one's self-identity, music has a profound effect in ways we will never understand. Music has also been shown to be impactful in the relationship among family members. In the next section, the construct of family intergenerational solidarity is examined. Subsequently, the available research on the use of music in family therapy is presented.

### **Intergenerational Solidarity**

Parent-child relationships are considered to be among the most important relationship individuals can have (Shapiro, 2004) because these relationships are a primary contributor to the psychological well-being of both members (Umberson, 1992) and they assist in keeping the elderly socially integrated (Silverstein, & Bengsten, 1991). Each family has their own culture, and this culture is dynamic and is constantly being transformed as members negotiate common meanings through interactions (Kwak, 2003). Each family's culture consists of core values and goals that serve as guiding principles in each family member's life (Kwak, 2003). Parent-child relationships facilitate value (Goodnow, 1997), personality features, and cultural transmission (Euler, Hoier, & Rohde, 2001) and have an influence on value socialization (Goodnow, 1997). As Albert Bandura (1986) postulated, model-learning-based parent-to-child value transmission is a major agent in development. In addition, Talcott Parsons (1964) proposed his classical, yet still valid, assertion that family is the most important socialization agent in the life of children and adolescents.

The term intergenerational solidarity refers to family cohesion between generations. It originates from an attempt to understand parent-child relationships in later life based on the Intergenerational Family Solidarity Model (McChesney & Bengston, 1988). Bengston and Schrader (1982) defined intergenerational family solidarity as consisting of six dimensions: (a) structure, (b) association, (c) affection, (d) consensus, (e) normative, and (f) function. Structure encompasses the geographic distance between the parent and child. The association dimension is measured by the frequency of face-to-face contact and contact by phone or email between parent and child. The consensus dimension is the degree of similarity on values and opinions between the parent and child. The affection dimension encompasses the emotional and physical intimacy between parent and child. The normative dimension involves the attitudes to four filial responsibilities: a child should live in close proximity to his/her parents in order to help them if needed, adult children should be willing to sacrifice some of the things to support their parents, older parents should be able to depend on their adult children to help them when they need it, and the parents are entitled to some return for the sacrifices they had made for their children. Last is the function dimension, which measures instrumental assistance provided by the parent to the child, and from the child to the parent (Lowenstein & Ogg, 2003).

Lowenstein and Ogg (2003) found several interesting results having to do with intergenerational solidarity. First, they found that marital status showed significant main effects for proximity, normative, and function solidarity. In fact, non-married elderly parents tend to live closer to their children, report higher levels of filial obligations, and tend to receive more support from their children. Another finding was that the greater number of children one has, the less contact and help is received from each child. Gender also has a significant main effect in that women tend to live closer to their children than men and report higher levels of filial



obligations. Lowenstein and Ogg found that financial stress has an impact on the amount of affection that is provided by children and the amount that the parent and child agree on certain views. Last, they found that the more disabled a family member, the more help they received. These results are important to consider when conducting studies on intergenerational family solidarity.

The amount of research focusing on intergenerational music experiences is limited. Beside the study conducted by Lowenstein and Ogg (2003), most of the research conducted has been on formal programs designed for school or community settings and often involve children under the age of eight (de Vries, 2012). Furthermore, most of the research that does exist tends to focus on choral singing (Bowers, 1998). For example, Bowers focused his research on college students and senior citizens participating in a choir program. Bowers concluded that both groups of participants had a positive experience. The study also found that both groups had a heightened performance experience (i.e., positive music experiences), better understanding of others (although participants were initially apprehensive of the project), and no signs of an age barrier (Bowers, 1998). It appears that formalized intergenerational programs are wide and varied and in most cases, the older adult is a mentor or tutor (de Vries, 2012). Informal intergenerational engagement is viewed as being important for the emotional and social benefits that it provides for both the child and adult (de Vries, 2012).

**Relevant studies on using music with families.** Music therapy is used with families and is similar to verbal family therapy but just uses different types of communication mediums (sounds and music pieces). Family music therapy's goal is to provide families with a more objective view of the situation and a more global understanding of the relational patterns in which the situations occur (Kossolapow, Scroble, & Waller, 2005). Free improvisation is a key

technique and allows for the individual family members to express themselves by various musical instruments. Ultimately, the family learns new ways of communicating and develops a more objective view of situations that occur (Kossolapow et al., 2005).

There are several studies that have examined the use of music within families. Hibben (1992) examined the use of music therapy with families with small children. She found that improvisational music in the family is similar to play and that songs in the sessions function similarly to a co-therapist. In addition, Hibben presented a case study that illustrated the value of music in helping generations communicate and work through family alliances and roles. The second study, conducted by Shoemark (1996), proposed an early intervention musical therapy program in which music was used to facilitate creative expression in each family member and to provide positive time, where they enjoy each other's company. The goal of this family-centered early intervention was to enhance the relationships among the family members. These studies used more of a preventative approach using music within the family, something that many music therapies are unable to do because they are arriving at therapy already with a "problem."

### **Young Adults – The New Developmental Stage**

The young adult population is a new socially constructed developmental stage that is only beginning to be investigated. Over the last decade this population has garnered attention and the research literature is growing at a rapid rate. Jensen (2011) reported that this life stage has arisen in industrialized countries over the past half-century. He argues that, 50 years ago, most young people entered stable adult roles in love and work by their late teens and early twenties. He went on to note that relatively few people pursued education or training beyond secondary school. Most young men were full-time workers by the end of their teens and relatively few women worked in occupations outside the home. The median age of marriage in 1960 was around 20 for

women and around 22 for men in the United States (Arnett & Taber, 1994). Married couples typically had their first child about 1 year after their wedding. Arnett and Taber state that this has all changed. For example, more than 60%, which is a higher proportion of young people than ever before, pursue education and training beyond secondary school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2009). The early 20s are now a time of job and financial instability; the average number of job changes between ages 20 to 29 in the United States is seven. The median age of entering marriage in the United States is now 26 for women and 28 for men (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2009). Consequently, a new period of life has been developed that was non-existent about 50 years ago.

There is a large cultural component to this relatively new developmental stage. Jensen (2011) argues that the economically developed countries, which demographers state comprise of the majority of the world's population, have experienced demographic changes, including the newly developed young adult stage. These countries are a part of the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD), which consists of the United States, Canada, Western Europe, Japan, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand (UNDP, 2006). Jensen attributes the growth of young adults in OECD countries to changes in the global economy and the similar revolutionary changes that have impacted the median ages of entering marriage and parenthood. It is important to remember, however, that the length of young adulthood and nature of young adulthood varies depending on culture.

According to Arnett (1995), the relationships between parents and their young adults is closer than any time since prior to World War II. Similarly, a recent national survey found that 80% of adolescents enjoyed a close relationship with their mother and 70% with their father. Another study collected longitudinal data taken by the Child Trends Data Bank from information

on more than 4,000 adolescents born between 1980 and 1984. This study concluded that the best predictor of positive academic and social outcomes at age 20 were “consistent, high-quality relationships” with parents (Hair, Moore, Ling, McPhee-Baker, & Brown, 2009). One recent study of students among 750 colleges found that those with highly involved parents tend to be more satisfied with their colleges, more engaged in their own learning, more collaborative, and more likely to interact with faculty members than students with less hovering parents (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010). Attachments to parents did not diminish over that period and in fact, the association between attachment to parents and psychological well-being remained strong and positive. Other studies have also examined the amount that children and parents communicate with one another and the proximity in which they live to one another. Nearly two thirds of children live within an hour of their parents, and nearly 8 in 10 young adults under the age of 25 talk to their parents on the phone daily (Corijn & Klijzing, 2001). Furthermore, in 2007, about 38% of women and 43% of men between the ages of 20 and 24 were living with their parents (Frank, 2007). This research has shown that the relationships between parents and their children is among the most important relationships that one can have.

Over the last several decades, the generation gap has shrunk and the wide range of attitudes, values, and behaviors has narrowed (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Often, children attend parties with their parents, share common values and views, gossip and talk daily with their parents, and live at home until their late 20s. There is less psychological and social distance between young adults and their parents, which ultimately provides a stronger foundation for interpersonal relationships. In fact, approximately 25 million young adults, age ranging from 18 to 34 years, are currently living with their parents and 65% of college graduates move home for at least a year or two (Straus, 2009a). Overall, children today have more in common with their

parents and this stronger solidarity between children and parents provides a stronger foundation from which to build future relationships (Settersten & Ray, 2010).

There are assumingly a large number of reasons for this rapid and drastic change in family intergenerational solidarity in America. First, as noted above, there are global economic reasons for the development of the young adult life stage. Second families appear to be smaller (parents have less children) and, thus, parents can dedicate more time, love, and energy to each child. Third, the immigration of different cultures into the U.S. has impacted the individualistic view that was fostered for many generations. Now, the U.S. appears to take on a more collectivistic attitude toward family support. For example, between 64 and 74% of young adults from Indian, Dominican, Chinese, Filipino, and Salvadoran/Guatemalan backgrounds still lived at home mostly out of a sense of family responsibility and obligation (Settersten & Ray, 2010). A fourth reason for change in family structure is because of the increase in divorce rates within the U.S. (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Divorced parents seek more support from their children because they lack spousal support. This is particularly true for mothers, whose relationship with their children, specifically daughters, tend to strengthen after divorce (Settersten & Ray, 2010). Strong family solidarity and even living under one roof has shown to increase emotional, psychological, and financial support among both the young adults and their parents (Settersten & Ray, 2010). In addition, it has shown to increase the amount of appreciation young adults show for their parents. The fourth reason for the increase in family solidarity among parents and their children may be due to the increase in technological communication tools, such as Skype, Facebook, instant messaging, and text messaging (Settersten & Ray, 2010). The ability to maintain a strong connection is much simpler and the routes for communication are much more plentiful.

Straus (2009b) states that the baby-boomer generation passed down “extramarital sex, recreational (and prescription) drugs, and the primal pleasure of good rock and roll” (p. 33). I enthusiastically agree with this statement and is additionally curious as to the amount rock and roll—and music in general—had an impact on the changes in family role and function over the last three decades.

### **Researcher’s Autobiographical Account**

Music has played a significant role in my family since I was a baby. In fact, there are videos of me as an infant dressed up in a variety of costumes—most memorably a fedora “dancing” in my high-chair to Frank Sinatra. By dancing, I mean just sitting there and drooling all over myself. My dad often would just leave the video camera faced toward me on the table for hours while music played.

When reflecting on the role the music played in my life, I immediately remember family memories. When I speak with my dad about the role that music played in his family’s life, he rattles off countless memories—his father playing saxophone at the local bar near the beach, his brother playing piano and singing during the holidays and at bars all around town, and the wonderful times he, my mother, my brother, and I would spend talking about and listening to music. The happiness that is evoked when discussing the role of music in the cohesion between our family members inspired me to explore this phenomena. When finding out that I was exploring this topic for my dissertation, we became even closer; he began to send me songs and movies about his favorite musicians because he wanted to help out. We also bonded over the fact that he was so proud that his daughter adopted his love for music—something that his father appeared to pass down to him and his brother. Below, I describe some of the most meaningful experiences that I had with my family that involved music.

There were speakers in every room in our house that were controlled by a master control box in my father's office. During holidays, nice weather, block parties, or just because he felt like it, my father would play music throughout the house. The music typically consisted of reggae, older Italian classics, classic rock, and Christmas music. One of my favorite memories was when, every year, my younger brother and I would arrive home from the last day of school to hear "School's Out for Summer" by Alice Cooper (1972) blasting in and outside of the house. This experience often triggered a flood of emotions. I was filled with joy and excitement knowing that the summer was starting, sadness for the end of the school year, and a sense of achievement facilitated by my parents' celebrations. Reflecting back on these experiences, I cherish and savor the way in which my father showed his love for me. My father shared his love through music, something that he probably learned through his family.

Growing up on the Jersey Shore, I had the privilege of listening to my uncle Jr. on piano and singing, and my grandpa Petrone on clarinet, at the bars and arenas around town. As a young girl, I remember having songs dedicated to me in front of hundreds of people. I remember feeling so special. As the years passed, my grandfather became ill with Alzheimer's disease. One of my last memories of my grandfather involves him playing the clarinet until one of his last days alive. While most of his memories have disappeared, his ability to communicate with music was still alive.

Another memory of mine that is indicative of the importance of music to my family happened during the road trips up to the Poconos a few times each winter. While my father was driving, he would quiz us on the music of his generation. One time he asked, "Who is this?" and my brother and I responded by saying, "I don't know, who?" to which he would respond, "Correct!" The joke was that The Who was playing on the radio. Through music, he taught me

what it was like to grow up in the 60s and 70s. I learned their cultural values and adopted a strong interest in the musicians and artists of that time. When I play “his music” when out in public, I am often received with gasps and reactions from strangers, such as “you’re too young to like this music.” Immediately, I think of my family and the strong bond that we have that was created around music. Like a second language, I value and appreciate this secondary communication system, that is music, which I have with my family.

Another way in which music increased my intergenerational solidarity with my family was through the concerts we attended together. Almost all of the concerts I have been to have been with my family. I attended concerts of bands I did not even know before I watched them play, such as Steely Dan. However, every time I hear a Steely Dan song, I am immediately brought back to my middle-school years and the concert I attended in the summer time with my mother. My father loves to share with his friends how well he raised me by taking me to these concerts. He is so proud that I took a strong interest in something that is so dear to his heart. I love music that much more knowing that my parents love music and love that I love music.

There are many other examples of how music was integrated into my life. My first dog was named Maggie May, after one of Rod Stewart’s most famous songs. I have a strong desire for reading biographies on musicians. My favorite books have been on John Lennon and Bob Dylan. My father, mother, and I often argue who our favorite Beatle is. Mine is John, as you would guess, but my father and mother’s is Paul. Lastly, I wrote my dissertation on how music strengthens family intergenerational solidarity.

At my practicum placement, I participated in a Secret Snowflake where the staff exchanged gifts with one another. A man with whom I co-lead groups and have shared many heartfelt conversations surrounding family and music was my Secret Snowflake. We decided to



exchange these gifts about two months after I lost my house to Hurricane Sandy. Along with my house, my father lost all of the CDs he has been collecting for decades. I opened the gift my Secret Snowflake got me and to my surprise, it was a Frank Sinatra CD. I was speechless. To my family, Frank Sinatra is the closest thing to an alternative to God as we can get. So, this gift could not have been more perfect. It helped me feel connected to my family during a very difficult time in our life.

### **Purpose of This Study**

There are several reasons why it is valuable to examine the use of music to strengthen intergenerational solidarity. First, it is important to consider the aging population which is living longer than the last. People are living longer and the emotional, financial, and physical support for this aging population is needed more than ever. The baby boomers are growing older and the demand for services will increase. Having a supportive family will help lessen this demand, even if by a little. Because America is considered to be an individualistic culture that focuses on the success of the individual more so than the success of the family, it would be useful to develop a preventative measure to ensure that the support that our elderly need is provided. We can strengthen the family by creating shared emotional experiences through the use of music. Increasing the solidarity between family members will increase the allegiance of children to their parents and will provide support for our aging population.

Another reason for this study was to support the use of music as a cheap, accessible, creative, and multiculturally sensitive tool that can be used with a variety of families. For families or the individuals within them that have a limited verbal capacity, are from diverse backgrounds, or who are averse to the idea of therapy, music can be a creative alternative that may be more appealing. Families with little in common can use music as a tool to increase their

intergenerational solidarity.

Third, there are times when, for example, the relationship between parent and their child is more difficult to maintain. For instance, during teenage years children can be very difficult while trying to develop a more autonomous self. Therefore, this research offered an easily accessible tool that many families can use during stressful times to maintain that relationship and to make it even stronger.

The fourth reason this study was important is because there is a lack of research done on meaning-making through the use of shared music. In addition, there is barely any research done on the use of music to strengthen intergenerational solidarity. This study aimed to strengthen and thicken the research.

Last, it is important to keep in mind that this phenomenon is more broad than an experience that just young adults have. I chose—possibly due to being a young adult myself—to study a part of what I consider to be a broad and interesting phenomena. In fact, family members of any generation and life stage can benefit from the use of music to help facilitate their bonding.

As described earlier in the chapter, there has been a dramatic change in the family structure and relations between adult children and their parents. Due to the sociocultural changes that affect the family, researchers have begun to pay more attention to the conditions which lead to the changes within the family (Kagitcibasi, 1996) such as the use of music. The absence of these close relationships is the riskiest it has ever been, argues Settersten and Ray (2010). In a time when the economy is bad, divorce rates are high, social expectations are high, and the world is unfortunately unfair, music can be a tool to counteract the infinite stresses in the world. This paper hoped to support the hypothesis that music is a useful tool in strengthening intergenerational family solidarity and meaning-making among young adults.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **Method**

This study used an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA; Smith et al., 2009) which consists of in-depth interviews used to collect data about how the meaning of music was constructed in the families and lives of young adults. Individuals were interviewed and encouraged to tell the story of their experiences, as well as explore topics of meaning-making and psychological and emotional change. The IPA methodology postulates that the research can discover concurrent themes within participants' narratives (Smith et al., 2009). IPA seeks to understand how participants make sense of their personal lived experiences and acknowledges the role of language and culture in the construction of psychological reality (Smith, 2003).

#### **Characteristics and Rationale of Method**

IPA seeks to explore in-depth, specific phenomena that have personal significance to the participant. It is a useful approach when attempting to unearth a complete picture of a particular occurrence while integrating and taking into consideration the participants' cognitive, affective, and physical being. IPA is a fundamentally idiographic, phenomenological, and hermeneutic approach to analysis. It is phenomenological because this method seeks to examine how participants make sense of major life experiences within their personal and social world (Smith & Osborn, 2003). IPA typically requires personally-salient accounts with some richness and depth. Secondly, it is what Smith et al. (2009) refers to as a "double hermeneutic." This means that although a researcher attempts to understand the participant's lived experience, it is still a subjective and reflective process of interpretation. Lastly, IPA is idiographic in that the analysis is inductive in nature. IPA examines the unique participant and their narrative and then steps back to examine similarities across participants and narratives.

A major characteristic of IPA is the unearthing and discovery of general themes (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Another characteristic of IPA is the acknowledgement of *symbolic interactionism*, which is the way meanings are constructed by individuals with both a social and personal world (Smith & Osborn, 2006). When utilizing IPA, the researcher has an active and collaborative role in the dynamic process by facilitating exploration into the participant's world and by engaging them in an open conversation about meaning (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

This approach was selected because of the limited knowledge concerning the topic and the need to collect rich textual data to identify issues for further research. IPA allows me to determine the lived experience of each individual and the extent to which the particular experience is similar or different for each and every young adult. In addition, IPA uniquely strives to explore and unearth in-depth meaning-making functions of unusual phenomena, and thus fits this study appropriately (Smith & Osborn, 2006).

### **Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

A semi-structured interview approach was adopted to allow for an in-depth exploration of the topic. The interviews were informal, with the participants being told that the interview would be an open discussion that explored the meaning and importance of music in their lives and their family's life. The participants were young adults whose family used music in their lives. These individuals were encouraged to reflect on the importance of music in their everyday lives, the ways music functioned in their lives, and the perceived benefits of being engaged in music making or listening (Hays, 2005).

Several of the interviews were held in my office at a university counseling center. Other interviews took place on a beach in New Jersey on a warm day in the winter, and at a Starbucks in a Barnes & Noble. Interviews lasted approximately one hour. The content of the interviews

explored questions of meaning-making and what psychologically happens or does not happen to someone whose family uses music in a meaningful way. The individuals' narratives were digitally recorded, transcribed verbatim, and carefully reviewed for underlying themes. Themes were then organized and interpreted into a transcendental phenomenological discussion of the musical experience. The researcher explored the narratives for the participants' expression of psychological change, which may or may not have occurred to them while engaging in or remembering the experience.

**Sampling and selection.** Creswell (2007) suggests that for a phenomenological study, sampling is best accomplished using individuals who have experienced the phenomena. This study utilized a synthesis of two techniques to recruit participants: snowball sampling and convenience approach sampling. The convenience approach toward sampling relies on easily accessible participants (Mertens, 2004), who then were able to refer us to useful potential candidates, through snowball sampling.

Participation was completely voluntary. Inclusion criteria included: (a) Young adults (age 20-30) who use music within their family in some meaningful way, and (b) must have an ability and willingness to reflect on experiences with their family, as well as their emotional and psychological change facilitated by music. Exclusion criteria include: An inability or lack of willingness to reflect on emotional and psychological change brought on by the use of music within one's family.

**Ethical considerations, informed consent, and recruitment.** There was minor perceived risk or danger to participants in this study. Participants were asked to participate in the study as long as they met criteria. I made reasonable attempts to protect the participants' identities. Before the interview, all participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity

and were given an informed consent (see Appendix A). The consent form was reviewed and all questions were answered before proceeding to data collection. It was emphasized that they could refuse to answer any question they found objectionable and could withdraw from the study at any time. Study participation was contingent upon signing the consent form. All participants signed the consent form and fully agreed to participate. In this study, I attempted to make the scientific foundations of all research transparent and accessible. At the end of the study, all final questions regarding the nature of the study or the interview process were answered. In addition, all the participants were thanked for their generosity and time, and informed of when they would expect to get the results if an interest was expressed.

**Data, data collection methods, and interview questions.** Data collection was comprised of semi-structured, open and closed question interviews. Smith et al. (2009) recommends that the researcher develop six to ten open-ended questions, as well as possible prompts, that will generate more detailed and rich responses aimed to ultimately help answer the research question. The interviews were digitally recorded, with a duplicate digital/tape recorder recording the interviews simultaneously as back-up. Using an IPA informed method, the semi-structured interviews focused around general and vague questions. This allowed respondents to guide the researcher toward uncovering the most relevant material (Smith, 2003). The interviews used a life history approach in order to obtain a biographical account of the participant's experiences where music had significant meaning or function in their lives. A recursive model of interviewing was also used in order to allow the participants to openly comment on or raise issues that they thought were relevant to the discussion and to allow the researcher to follow up with questions such as: "Tell me more about this?" All questions specified in the schedule were covered, however, the schedule did not have a fixed question

order and it also allowed participants to expand on the issues that were particularly salient to them. The following lists the questions:

1. What does music mean to you?
2. Did your family use or come together around music in anyway?
3. What experiences do you remember where music played a role in your family interactions?
4. What is the most meaningful experience(s) that you recall where your family cohesion was strengthened through music?
5. How has music influenced your family cohesion/the relationship between your family members between generations?
6. What about music produced meaning for your family cohesion between generations?
7. Has music changed you (emotionally and/or psychologically) and/or your family in any way?
8. What musicians, artists, bands, or songs have special meaning for you?
9. Did anyone play music or sing in your family? How did that contribute to your family cohesion?
10. When this certain musician, artist, band, or song plays, what comes up for you (feelings, visceral reactions, thoughts about yourself, your past, your present, and your life in general)?
11. How do you intend to use music with your own family in the future?
12. Young adults are invited to say anything they wish concerns music increasing their family intergenerational solidarity, psychology, change, or anything at all.

***Researcher relationship to participants and data.*** I interviewed the participants using semi-structured interviews. Several interviews were held in the researcher's office at a university counseling center. Other interviews took place on a beach in New Jersey on a warm day in the winter, and a Starbucks in a Barnes and Nobles. I began each interview with a loosely scripted/prompting question which facilitated exploration into how young adults make meaning of music within their family. In addition, I examined the participant's subjective experience of psychological or emotional change as a result of using music with their family.

***Bias and its incorporation into the process.*** Marleau-Ponty (1962) argues that a researcher must become aware of and expose his or her experiences and preconceived biases. The process of IPA is subject to the interpretation and information that the researcher transmits to text (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999). Therefore, I disclosed and reflected upon her personal biases, subjectivity, and experiences of music's perceived meaning and role within her family in the literature review chapter in order to suspend this potential bias. The antecedents to this proposed study are my own experiences with the use of music within my family.

***Data analysis.*** The following section explores the data analysis procedures and offers a hypothetical data matrix model. It outlines the four steps used in IPA data analysis.

***Data analysis procedure.*** The study adopted an IPA-styled method and will consist of four interdependent steps: (a) data collection through semi-structured interviews, (b) the transcription of interviews, (c) search for themes, (d) analysis of the themes, and (e) connection among interviewees to create a matrix of meaning-making among young adults who experienced the strong use of music within their family.

During the first step, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews with young adults who use music to make meaning in their life and of their family. All interviews consisted of general



and prompting questions concerning how young adults make meaning of their life and of their intergenerational family solidarity with the use of music. In addition, these questions explored if they experienced emotional or psychological change with the use of music. Detailed notes were kept and the interviews were digitally recorded.

The second step consisted of the researcher transcribing the recorded interviews. Third, the transcribed interviews were read and reread in order for me to immerse myself in the world and experience of the participant. The transcribed interviews consisted of initial notes reflecting Creswell's (2007) approach. The Creswell approach suggests that qualitative research is based on, "insight, intuition, and impression" (p. 150). Creswell suggests that sharing subjective and personal biases, discovering specific "statements" of participants about the phenomena, and drafting a description of the phenomena, may help dissipate any subjective influences that are probable to occur. In addition to notes reflecting "insight, intuition, and impression" (p. 150), the researcher also notes descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual comments during this second step (Smith et al., 2009).

The fourth step of data analysis involves a careful and systematic review of the transcribed interviews and researcher's initial notes, ideas, and observations. The interviews, along with the notes created by the researcher, were reviewed and catalogued, looking for emerging contextual statements that can be established into themes and will "reduce the volume of detail whilst maintaining complexity" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 91). This step also involves the researcher keeping a detailed research log of the rationale of the analysis of the transcripts and the exploratory comments made. That is, the researcher describes the inferences of how the themes were discovered, supported by verbatim extracts from the interviewees, as a way to maintain the integrity of the participant's own words.

In the fifth stage of analysis, I described the general and typical themes that were garnered from the interview, initial notes, ideas, and observations in the form of a narrative in the results section. The results section describes the super-ordinate themes (Smith et al., 2009) or “higher-order theme titles” that convey the conceptual nature of the theme. In addition, the results section examines how the themes map together to offer a more thorough understanding of the meaning-making features and perceptions of psychological change among young adults who listen to music and use music within their family. I was careful to maintain the integrity of the participant’s own words and their distinction from/to my interpretations.

*Sample of data.* The study used a homogenous, small sample size (Smith et al., 2009). Smith (2003) suggests that the strength of the IPA method is the depth rather than the breadth of knowledge obtained. I interviewed ten participants because Smith et al. suggest that a sample size of between 4 and 12 is sufficient; however, there is no ideal sample size. Although I interviewed ten participants, the interviews were in-depth explorations into the intimate and personal details of how young adults make meaning of the use of music within their family. Also, due to the time required to explore how young adults make meaning of music, practical concerns necessitate a manageable sample size (Smith et al., 2009). The sample consists of ten young adults, ages 20 through 30, whose family had used music in a meaningful and significant way.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results**

In this chapter, I review the data collected from ten young adults who have experienced the strengthening of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music. These young adults were asked a series of questions (Appendix B) about their perception of how music impacted their family to determine if themes concerning psychological change and meaning-making existed among them. Data was interpreted into general themes. The results section is organized into three segments: (a) the participants, (b) demographics, and (c) the general themes.

#### **Participants**

Participants were recruited using the convenience and snowball sampling approaches. Although Hill et al. (1997) reported that challenges come with exploratory, qualitative inquires when trying to identify participants, this researcher found that the recruitment process was not difficult and, in fact, easier than expected. When I asked young adults about their interest in the study and whether or not they met criteria, many were eager to participate and expressed a strong interest in talking about their family and use of music. When asked for recommendations, many of the participants enthusiastically recommended friends and family members that they thought would be interested in participating in the study. Several participants even recommended friends or family when they were not asked for recommendations. In addition, three individuals who did not meet criteria due to age restrictions asked to take part in this study because they found the topic to be thought provoking and, as one individual put, “fun” to talk about. These individuals did not participate in the study. However, in the future it may be useful to interview individuals of different generational (or developmental) groups to assess for differences in responses.

## **Demographics**

Ten young adults (ages 20 through 30) were interviewed and asked 12 questions (Appendix B) about psychological change and meaning-making. All of the young adults invited to participate were eager to do so and participated without hesitation. The participants varied in their use of music within their families. Eight of the young adults identified as Caucasian and two identified as Hispanic. Eight of the participants were female and two of them were male, and they represented varying levels of education. Interactions with the young adults lasted from 32 to 55 minutes in duration. Several interviews were held in the researcher's office at a university counseling center while others took place on a beach in New Jersey on a warm day in the winter, and at a Starbucks in a Barnes & Noble. These young adults were asked 12 questions (Appendix B) in an effort to probe four primary issues: Why is that some families use music to strengthen their family intergenerational solidarity? What meaning do young adults make about their intergenerational solidarity through the use of music? How do young adults use music within their family to create psychological or emotional change? Did music play a large role in the change of the family structure—and if so, in what way(s)? Using a Hill et al. (1997) data analysis approach, interview transcripts were analyzed for general themes within the general topic.

## **General Themes**

General themes are topics of discussion that are present in all or most (at least eight of the participants) of the ten young adults' responses. General themes were present in the responses to corresponding questions but in some cases, however, general themes were also generated from the transcripts of the interview as a whole. For instance, one young adult, when asked if she had experienced emotional or psychological change due to the use of music within her family,

originally answered, “I don’t think so.” As the interview progressed, however, the young adult made it abundantly clear that she had in fact experienced emotional and psychological change due to the use of music within her family. In many instances, responses were strikingly similar, which greatly eased the interpretative process, and also contributed to the utility of the themes that became apparent.

Seven general themes emerged: (a) I have experienced bonding among/with my family members through the use of music; (b) I have experienced emotional and/or psychological change through the use of music; (c) I have experienced the transmission (up, down, or laterally) of musical interest and/or talent among family members, (d) I have experience a strong emotional experience with music (SEM) in the presence of my family; (e) I have experienced the bonding of my family members over a musical performance and/or with the use of a musical instrument; (f) I have experienced the triggering of memories when I listen to music; and (g) I found music to be meaningful during a holiday(s), tradition(s), or religious or cultural experience(s). The first theme, I have experience bonding among/with my family members through the use of music, sets the scene for those which follow.

The six following themes represent six ways in which the young adults obtained the first theme: greater cohesion with family members of different generations through the use of music. The following section explains these seven broadly defined experiences and presents a section of the exact responses that highlight the general theme. Each young adult’s transcript was randomly assigned a number; that number does not necessarily reflect the interview order. Themes are presented in boldface.

**I have experienced bonding among/with my family members through the use of music.** All of the participants were able to describe an experience where their family members

bonded over the use of music. All of the participants described different ways that the music assisted in the strengthening of their family cohesion. For instance, one participant talked about a “bonding moment” when she performed in choir, while another participant bonded with their family over the making of a CD that contained their favorite songs from the summer. One of the participants described the emotional closeness that she achieved with her father after they listened to a James Taylor CD together. While the narratives and experiences within them varied, all had one thing in common: the participants had observed the strengthening of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music.

The following selection of verbatim responses demonstrates the young adults’ experience of bonding with family members over the use of music.

Young Adult 1:

Well, in college in the spring, I did this opera workshop at my school. This was the coolest thing in my life I think I ever got to do. I got to perform a 15-minute scene from “la boheme” on stage, and in costume, in full get up or whatever. But my family came from Cincinnati—which is like 3 hours away—and I remember at the end my grandmother was like “Oh you made me cry.” My grandmother cried. It was nice because my family usually has hard standards. To have my family’s approval and to have them come around because of my performance was really nice. In a lot of ways it strengthened the connection between us because they can see “Oh, you’ve done this and we’re proud of you.” And for me it is like hearing “We don’t hate what you’re doing.” So kind of—in a strange way—it is not that we all sit around and sing songs, it is more of a generation thing, like passing this on from my grandpa who sang, my mom who played piano, and onto me and my sister.

Young Adult 2:

Music definitely plays a substantial role in the bond my family members and I share. My mother plays a guitar and a few nights out of the week we will sit outside with the music, listening to songs that ease our souls. Although as individuals our days and jobs differ, the times we share listening to music together strengthens the bond we have. Most of my favorite memories with my family are those that consisted of the nights we sat outside, Pandora coming through the outdoor speakers, and each of us singing out the lyrics to some of the best songs ever made.

Young Adult 2 continued:

Growing up in a family of five, I feel each of us has so much to offer this world and each other. Despite the different paths people take in life, they can be brought together and understand each other through music. In a continuously changing society, a shared love for music creates a foundation that keeps people together.

Young Adult 3:

The most meaningful experience would have to be picking a summer song each year. Throughout the summer, my family would spend hours together on the beach. We would play volleyball, swim, play in the sand, and just hang out with everyone. At the end of the beach day, we would go home, take showers and start making dinner together as a family. While making dinner, we would turn on the radio and listen to the newest and most popular songs for that year. We would memorize the words to our favorite songs and sing along as loud as we could. At the end of the summer, our family—like our immediate, cousins, aunts, and family friends, would vote on our favorite song of the summer. We would all have to narrow our choices and decide on one to be the summer

song. After several years, we made a CD of all of our summer songs and gave one to each family member. As we got older, it was more difficult to get everyone together as much and the tradition started to die out. However, we all have our CDs still and it's a reminder of how great family really can be.

Young Adult 3 continued:

Using the story that I talked about before about the summer songs, it gave us a chance to see what we all had in common with each other in relation to music. We were able to agree on the same song even though we may have had very different tastes regarding other things in our lives. This also made it a lot of fun to hang out with other family members such as cousins who wouldn't be caught dead hanging out with their nine-year old cousins! We found out we enjoyed our time together which made our relationship that much stronger as we got older and busier each year.

Young Adult 4:

I have very early childhood memories of the sound of my father's music drifting up from the kitchen in our home, waking me from sleep on weekend mornings. Strange music, heavy music—music laden with emotion that I didn't quite understand yet. But I loved it. Fleetwood Mac, Nirvana, U2, Pearl Jam, The B52s, Eric Clapton, Neil Young. The list goes on. Though my mother didn't frequently listen to music, and when she did, it was to her favorite band, The Who, she often sang to me as a child, mainly the classics like "Itsy Bitsy Spider" and "You Are My Sunshine." As I grew older and my younger brother was born, we often came together as a family in the kitchen, with music blasting, cooking, cleaning up, and dancing—Oh, the dancing (smiling)! Music allowed us in those moments to connect in a warm, carefree and goofy way. We danced like no one



was watching—or at least we were hoping no one was watching (laughing)! That tradition has continued to this day, and still brings us joy.

Young Adult 5:

The first time my dad ever spoke about his father was during a long car trip when I played a James Taylor CD. He shared with me that the song reminded him of when his father died, which he'd never talked to me about before. It led to one of the closest and deepest conversations we'd ever had. My brother and I became close because of music too. He got me into some jam bands and we started going to shows and festivals together. It was the basis for our whole relationship. We've definitely grown apart since we stopped going to concerts together. We don't have much else in common.

Young Adult 6:

I got to take my little sister to her first concert. We were four years and three states apart at the time, and considering she was a 16-year-old girl, we didn't have much in common. But we both loved music. She came down to visit me at school, and I surprised her with tickets to see one of her favorite bands. Our relationship only grew closer from that day forward, and we have since been to dozens of shows together.

Young Adult 7:

When I was about 15-years-old, my mom started taking me and my friends to local concerts, as we were too young to drive there, and we were definitely too young to go to venue halls alone! It became a great bonding experience as my mom learned some of our music. I'd burn her CDs, and it gave us a chance to spend more time together. After a while my brother started to come to the concerts with us, when he started to like the pop punk scene.

Young Adult 8:

One of the most meaningful experiences that I had involving music and my family was last year. I went on vacation to Ecuador to see my mother's side of the family. They actually have a sort of traveling festival or party that they call "San Juan." People would travel with a band and make occasional stops at houses and start playing music. The music would then get people dancing and singing. My family loves this and I was lucky enough to be in Ecuador while this was going on. Sure enough, they made a stop at my uncle's house and it was an impromptu party. I enjoyed dancing, singing, and seeing my whole family have a great time. It was pretty memorable and a great experience. Everyone just let loose for a minute and enjoyed the music. We all had a chance to bond through music and by having fun.

Young Adult 9:

My family always used music as a means to bond. We always had music on all of the time. On weekends my mother would turn the music on at 6a.m. and start cleaning the house. My siblings and I would sing and dance along as we helped clean. My dad would have the congas, bongos, or the guitar and play along with the music. It was a happy time for us and very memorable. During family gatherings we would make it a show.

Young Adult 10:

When I was younger I can still remember my mother and father in the car coming home from our aunt and uncle's house on Sundays. They would have Bruce Springsteen blasting. While dad was driving, mom would always turn around and explain what he was singing about, why he was singing, and how they grew up on this good music. My family loves music. Every Sunday my father has the family over and whether we are

grilling out back in the summer time or just hanging indoors during the winter the music is always going. It is never silent in my house or my parents'.

**I have experienced emotional and/or psychological change through the use of music.**

All of the participants described experiencing emotional and/or psychological change through to the use of music. Two of the young adults reported that they were unsure of whether they experienced psychological or emotional change when asked the corresponding question. However, they made it abundantly clear in the rest of their narrative that they had experienced emotional or psychological change. Six of the young adults described emotional change that they observed in another family member. The following selection of verbatim responses demonstrates the emotional or psychological change that the young adult experienced or observed in another through the use of music.

Young Adult 1:

I think that in a lot of ways, music allows me to be in touch a part of myself that I don't get to as often. It just kind of takes me beyond words. Like taking voice lessons helped me to be able to take feedback that is personal in nature—like if you sing you are using your body and yourself as a vehicle to make this happen, every time you get feedback that's personal, that's something about you, you are not making it happen right. But it has taught me how to take that feedback and how to push through it in a constructive way. I learned that when I sing I tend to push and tense up my shoulders. When I know there's a high note I anticipate it a lot—it's how I deal with life anyways. The tension about it or apprehension will be there. But I also think that it helps me step out of the ordinary. Like when I sing, I can just be transported to another place—you know, that is away from like stress, or crap or whatever. And I think that singing in ensembles has

taught me a lot about being a part of a group—not overpowering with your voice, but when you have solos, feeling like you have the responsibility of the group on your shoulders and what that means. So I think it taught me about life in general.

Young Adult 1 continued:

My mom is real interesting, she works for a software developer, she is very mathematical thinking but she went to a music performance school in Ukraine for a number of years and she was a really good pianist. She was really good at hearing whether it was correct pitch. She would also point out to me if I was singing the wrong notes which was not helpful (smiling). For her, I almost wonder if it's a way to access a different part of herself. Since moving to America she hasn't done or tried to play, even though I bought a key board in high school so we had one so she could have played it. I don't know, in some ways it is her way of artistic expression.

Young Adult 2:

Music is medicine to me. I consider it the most easily accessible tool to fix something that's broke. Whether I am having a bad day, a stressful day, or a sad day, music takes my mind away to another place.

Young Adult 2 continued:

My brother struggled with drug addiction. He always says that more than anything in this world, he needs music. During his worst times and his best times, his highest and his lowest there was always a song that fit his mood perfectly and calmed his mind. Music has been there for him. I think that is why we all love music so much, it's always there for us. Sometimes when we need something or someone, we call but they don't pick up, we'll look but can't find what we need. When we need music, we turn it on. It is

immediate satisfaction to ease our minds.

Young Adult 3:

Music is a distraction for me. After a hectic day at work, I always turn up my music on my commute home to forget alleviate stress and get away from the real world for a little while. Often times, I listen to my Ipod since it is music that I chose and know that I like. I sing along and forget about a kid who was rude to me, an administrator who did not acknowledge my hard work, or a child's parent who believed their 12-year-old child over a teacher (laughing). Music is a way to forget the negatives in my life and it is also a connection to events. When I hear a song that reminds me of my high school days it always puts a smile on my face. I start to conjure up memories of times when life was a lot simpler.

Young Adult 4:

As I mentioned above, I feel like music has played a huge role in my life. I don't know if it has changed me emotionally or psychologically. I know that it certainly has helped me through difficult times, in that it was soothing and kept me dreaming, hoping, feeling. It always seemed to resonate with what I was feeling. Most likely I sought out the music that matched where I was at any given point in time. I'm sure that music has contributed to my family being creative—each member individually, and as a whole. It's always allowed a more creative flow and a greater openness in emotional expression.

Young Adult 5:

Music means peace. I use music to help me calm down after a hard day at work or to help me relax and focus. Music also gives me energy. It is a big part of my physical health because it provides the tempo for my running and workouts. I also associate music with

parties, whether with friends or family. I think it can set the tone for a gathering.”

Young Adult 5 continued:

Definitely. Music can easily evoke an emotion for me, whether it's the beat, the lyrics, or its attachment to a memory. It's made me realize how much power I have to control my feelings and surround myself with positivity. All I have to do is turn on some music.

Remembering to do it is another thing. I'm not sure how much it's affected my family, but I know that my dad travels a lot and listens to music on his trips. I know that my brother and probably my dad also share the connection between music and memories.

Like how a song can bring us back to another moment in time.

Young Adult 6:

Yes, music changes my state of mind every day. Certain types of music can add to joy or excitement, while others can help me cope with stress or frustration. Music can motivate me before a workout, or relax me before bed. It constantly triggers different emotions, and has a huge effect on my state of mind.

Young Adult 7:

Music is a way to express your feelings. I feel that depending on my mood, I'm able to find a few songs or an artist or an album that reflects the way I'm feeling and I use the music to sing at the top of my lungs while driving, to be energized into dancing and working out, or going out. Music is usually a soundtrack or memories from a trip or event.

Young Adult 8:

I don't know if music has changed me psychologically, but I do believe it can alter moods. I don't mope around and listen to depressing music, but sometimes I hear a song

and want to scream or sing along to it. As for my family, the holidays we always listen to music and if my mom is doing something around the house she listens to CD's of her music.

Young Adult 9:

Music to me helps soothe the soul. It's almost like a therapy session where you can lay back and close your eyes and simply get lost and relax. You always feel better after listening to some good tunes.

Young Adult 10:

Music is a way of life. It's everywhere in the world. I cannot imagine my life without music. I feel like every aspect of my life has been its own soundtrack. I feel like I grew up around music my whole life so far and I learned to appreciate what good music really is. Music can determine my mood and my vibe. Depending on what kind of mood I am in I listen to certain types of music.

**I have experienced the transmission (up, down, laterally) of musical interest and/or talent among family members.** All ten of the participants described the transmission of musical taste and/or talent from one family member to another. Some of the participants were explicit in their description of the transmission, while others provided narratives where the transmission was implied. For instance, one participant noted that she looked up to her grandfather and "knowing that he liked to sing was part of the things that made [her] want to sing, too" (young adult #1). On the other hand, several participants noted that they played piano simply because it was in the house that they grew up in, with no mention of the role their parents played in having the piano be present in their house. All of the participants described the passing down, from parent(s) to child, or grandparent(s) to grandchild, of musical taste or talent. Five

participants reported upward transmission, from child to parent(s), of musical taste. Eight of the participants mentioned that they bonded with their sibling(s) over music and two did so with their cousins. All of the young adults described passing down (or the plan to pass down) musical taste or talent to their children. The following selection of verbatim responses demonstrates the young adults' experience of the transmission (up, down, or laterally) of musical taste and/or musical talent among family members.

Young Adult 1:

I mean, I think definitely during the holidays—that was it. I also know that when I was growing up and in high school, this is terrible, but my parents made me sing in front of everyone. During my grandpa's birthday in high school we were at this Russian restaurant and they made me sing this opera song in front of everyone, a cappella, with no music because my dad wanted to (laughing). Part of it was for my grandpa, it was a present for him—but also there were some people that my dad knew from work and he pretty much wanted to impress them with his talented children. And so he made me sing. And then for my grandparents wedding anniversary in college, I had to come back and had to sing in another Russian restaurant. So in some ways it's been a part of that, like my family always kind of encouraging us to like “Keep singing, you know don't lose this, this is your gift” or whatever. So it's been a lot about performance in that way. Because they don't really listen to music, although I know that my mom likes Pink Floyd. That's the only thing I know she likes, but it's not like we ever turn on music—it's much more about creating music and performing and things like that.

Young Adult 1 continued:

My grandpa, he's adorable, and he writes like poetry for special occasions—just like



funny poetry that he calls this cool name. And, I remember when we were little he wrote a song for my grandma's birthday. He wrote this poem about a squash and then he put it to music and he taught to me and my sister and we sang it for her when we were little (laughing). And so I think like for me, I always looked up to my grandpa as a role model, and he was the only person in my family who could sing. And like my mom went to music school but she has like no—she was excused from choir because her voice was so terrible. But she can like play piano! So I think in some ways it was a generational thing. And for me, looking up to my grandpa and knowing that he liked to sing was part of the things that made me want to sing, too.

Young Adult 2:

I am so used to music being a part of everything in my house. Whether it's making dinner or eating dinner, two people or 20 people, music is present. I can't imagine a life without it during my time at home, my time in the car, and my time alone. I think because I would have a hard time living without it, my traditions will continue with my children. Hopefully music will influence their life the same.

Young Adult 3:

My Grandpa, Mom, and brother all sing and have for some time. My grandpa was a fantastic singer who used to invite his friends over to the beach house for cards and record himself singing with all of them. He passed his love of music on to my mom. When my brother was younger we never knew he could sing because he thought it was dorky and didn't want to be in the choir. When he got to high school however, he auditioned for Grease and got a lead role. Since then, he began singing in talent shows, with a band, and in an a cappella group in college. This contributed to my family

cohesion because we all came together to listen to these people sing. My mom would have us listen to our grandpa's cassette tapes when we were younger. He died before we were born so it was a way of getting to know him.

Young Adult 4:

I don't believe my parents shared much in common with their parents in terms of music. However, my brother and I have bonded significantly with my parents through music. Though we didn't always think my dad was the coolest guy ever, we pretty consistently recognized his excellent taste in music and frequently looked to him for advice on which cassette tape then CD then MP3 to buy. Music is like anything else that we share in common—something that is stimulating and interesting and moves us to feel something together. Now my brother and I are often the ones recommending new music to my dad, which feels good—it's like we're able to give back, finally!

Young Adult 5:

My brothers and I have always liked the music that our parents liked. It didn't always work in reverse. I think I tend to view some music as great just because I know my dad liked it. I don't know much about my grandparent's taste in music, two are still living but we're not close. The other two passed away many years ago. When my boyfriend's grandmother visits, I always ask her what music she wants to listen to because we put it on throughout the house. I think it's such an easy way to connect with her. We joke about the time that my boyfriend walked in and said, "What's this crap?" When he found out that his grandmother picked it, he immediately changed his tune and said it was great. He adores his grandmother. Sharing a taste and interest in music with my parents makes me feel connected to them. It makes our similarities seem more apparent. I think it's the

events we go to around music that mean the most. It's an activity—a memory of quality time spent.

Young Adult 5 continued:

I hope that my kids will be musically inclined. I'd certainly hope to get the piano from my parents so that I can teach my kids to play. I'd love to be able to go to concerts and shows with my own kids.

Young Adult 6:

Yes, in multiple generations. Classic rock was played for me by my parents, and it allowed me to experience what their childhood was like. Although I wasn't there physically, the music of the 60's and 70's gave me an understanding of past cultures and beliefs, and allowed me to relate to my parents. Music also allowed me to communicate with my grandfather, whose native language is Hungarian. I learned the most about my heritage through music, especially the language.

Young Adult 6 continued:

Music will be the tie that binds us together. It will always be present in my home, and even more so in my car. I will use it to educate my children about our past, and to teach them daily activities and responsibilities. I will also encourage them to learn an instrument, so that they may have an outlet for creativity.

Young Adult 7:

I hope to share music with my children. Hopefully, teach them the same artists that I enjoyed with my family.

Young Adult 8:

Music has always been around my family and I. It is not just limited to the holidays, but

the way music impacts us the most is around holiday time. We usually do some singing around the holidays in Spanish as a tradition and as an homage to my mom and how she grew up around it.

Young Adult 9:

It contributed a lot. We have a lot of singers and musicians in our family. My dad plays and I sing, and other members in our family do as well. I started playing the violin when I was nine-years-old and have been playing since. I would say it make our bond as a family much more strong. Music generally draws people in and make them come together so when music was present during our gatherings, we had a much better time and shared a lot more laughs and built stronger relationships.

Young Adult 10:

Well I show my parents great new music, nothing like rap or anything like that, but I have introduced them to some tunes that they really really enjoy. Of course I listen to a lot of their types of music like the ones I mentioned previously. There are times where I say I wish I grew up in a different time. Each generation's music says a lot about what they have gone through and what times were like back then. I think even my parents telling me stories about the concerts they used to go see is something that has made me very jealous and makes me wish I could have been there.

**I have experienced a strong emotional experience with music (SEM) with a family member(s).** All of the participants described a SEM in the presence of a family member(s). Gabrielsson and Lindstrom Wik (2003) describe a SEM as an experience where emotional change occurs while listening to music. According to Gabrielsson and Lindstrom Wik (2003), a SEM contains seven elements: physical responses, quasi-physical responses, perceptual aspects,

cognitive transformation, cognitive-emotional aspects, emotional responses, and transcendental and existential aspects. Below are verbatim responses from all of the young adults that elucidate the SEM they had experienced.

Young Adult 1:

I mean I think one of the most meaningful experiences is when me and my family were sitting around on New Years, watching those concerts or listening to traditional Russian-ish music. Definitely think that it brings people together. There is something about listening to that type of music when I'm with my family.

Young Adult 2:

My cousin passed away at a young age. As we were leaving his funeral his friends handed us a DVD that had recent pictures of him and some of the awesome things he did before he died. When we got into the car we immediately played the DVD. My brother was the only one in the back that could watch it and the first song that was played on the DVD with pictures was "As long as I can see the light," by Creedence Clearwater Revival. After the first few seconds of the song played there was an overbearing moment of emotion. The instruments from the song seemed to fade as we all began to cry. At that time my immediate family hugged each other so tight, in hysterics, but continued to watch the DVD. As the song played in the background images of him so happy and free filled the screen. It was a warm feeling, but at the same time there was a shared feeling of emptiness. Ever since that moment, hearing the songs played on that DVD, especially that first song sends chills through my body. I think of how sad we were at that time but I remember how we immediately grabbed for each other. Between the five of us we knew would have the support we needed—and we did. That song will always remind me of the

amazing family I have.

Young Adult 3:

When my grandmother passed away, we sang songs at her funeral that we had learned in church. It helped ease the pain of her passing because we knew she would reach heaven. A song that was a great help was titled “On the Other Side.” My brother recorded this song and played it alongside a video at her funeral. Every time we hear the song, we are reminded of my Grammy.

Young Adult 4:

My family additionally enjoys musicals—we will attend Broadway shows that involve musical production when we can, and we are all big concert lovers. Oh, the thrill of live music! Even when we are unable to attend these events together, the music still brings us together as we excitedly share the details of the performance over email/text/phone in the days following.

Young Adult 5:

When you’re with someone at a concert or show, and you’re both absorbed in the music, it’s like you’re connected in the emotion of it.

Young Adult 6:

The Beatles have had the greatest impact on my life. I knew songs by heart before I even knew who the Beatles were, thanks to my parents singing them to me as a child. Their music created a bond between my parents and I, and eventually my siblings as well. “I wanna hold your hand” is the first song I remember hearing, so that song will always hold a special place in heart.

Young Adult 6 continued:

Without music, we would all be miserable. Whether music excites us, angers us, reminds us, or helps us forget, it accomplishes something. It elicits emotion and thought, which leads to understanding and discussion. It allows us to understand ourselves. It helps us convey messages through time and distance, and without it, there would be even more uncertainty in the world.

Young Adult 7:

On a trip to California, I had purchased the Amnesty International CD of John Lennon's music performed by different artists. We played it in the car when driving. My parents knew the songs, but the children knew most of the artists. I remember driving in downtown LA blasting "Instant Karma" by U2 and every one of us singing it on the top of our lungs together. This was definitely a great moment.

Young Adult 8:

Music is all around us and I am sure I am not the only one to embrace it. You can feel it and it can just describe the exact situation you are in at times. That is what makes it so relatable and enjoyable.

Young Adult 9:

After a funeral, we would have a celebration of that family member's life and play music and the instruments. What would be time of mourning would always end up beautiful and everyone would be peaceful and smiling celebrating with music. Music brought us closer and took the pain away.

Young Adult 10:

Normally when I hear all this music my mood brightens. These are all the people I love to

listen to. Normally each song can bring my back to more than one memory from it. I can think of the time and place that I was and who I was with. I can even remember how I felt at the time when I heard the song—whether it was for the first time or for the 100<sup>th</sup> time. I normally think more to the past, but when there is an empowering song, lately, it makes me think of my future. There are songs that remind me of people in my life that are no longer with me which is always a sad thing, but at the same time the song brings back great memories and I can smile because of them.

**I have experienced the bonding of my family members over a musical performance and/or with the use of a musical instrument.** All ten of the participants experienced the bonding of family members over the use of a musical instrument or during a musical performance. One of the participants observed the use of a musical instrument in their family but denied that it had any effect on the cohesion between the family members. Below are verbatim responses that describe an experience where the young adult observed the strengthening of their family cohesion over a musical performance or the use of a musical instrument. Young adult #9's response was also used under the first theme because it reflects both the bonding of family members and, more specifically, the bonding of family members over a musical instrument.

Young Adult 1:

Music definitely influences my family cohesion, I mean I think it's a common thread, at least on my mom's side of the family. My dad's side—well, my dad is tone deaf—which he owns. So he's kind of different because my mom went to performance school and we had piano in the house. They never taught me how to play it, which is not helpful. And then my grandpa, he actually has a good voice and can sing, and is musical. I feel like



they are passed down traditions in some sort of way, or in my family there is just a value on musical talent and performance. So I think being able to have that with each generation just reinforces that value for the family.

Young Adult 2:

My mother is a self-taught guitar player which actually hurts our ears more than soothes them, but her love for the song she is trying to play is what we find most entertaining. She needs a lot of practice, but the laughter we all share as we listen to her sing the wrong lyrics out of rhythm, is unexplainable.

Young Adult 3:

My brother is a fantastic singer and was asked by the women who had taught us songs at church to sing at her son's funeral. Her son had died from testicular cancer at the age of 29. This woman had been faithful since the day she was born and when her son died it was hard for us to have that strong faith in God. It didn't seem fair. When she had asked my brother to sing, it was an honor. When the church became quiet after several readings, Danny walked up to the mic and began singing. Mrs. Daly had chosen the song, "Somebody's Praying." Throughout her son's battle with cancer, she had never lost faith in God. She wanted to the people who came to say goodbye to her son to know that they were all thankful for the prayers they received. Through this song, we realized that that young man was taken because of Mrs. Daly's faith and God knew that she would be able to recover from such a tragedy. Every time we hear this song, we are reminded that songs can send a message and could represent a difficult time in our lives but also a positive one.

Young Adult 4:

My father played the guitar when he was in high school and perhaps for some time in college. He probably wanted to be a rock star but that didn't really pan out (laughing). But he loves music so much. My brother and I both played an instrument for about five minutes when we were younger and my mother played a bit of piano when she was a teenager. More recently we are more into the talent of others, but we are happy to sing along. My family has often bonded around disliking my purposely terrible opera singing—a few people are lucky enough to catch those performances.”

Young Adult 5:

I took piano lessons and singing lessons as a kid. I wish I had stuck with it. At times, I'll fool around on the piano at my parent's house and wish I could play the classical songs I love so much. I remember singing in recitals and singing the national anthem at swim meets. My parents were always very proud. My brother played the viola but didn't stick with it. My parents sing at church, but not otherwise. I want to have their piano when they move, but my boyfriend thinks it's a waste of space. This is one of the bigger, unresolved arguments about how to furnish our home. I think he's ridiculous. I guess I stopped playing the piano after my family moved. I probably told my mom I didn't want to anymore. I was probably just mad about moving. And I guess I didn't love to practice. She probably wasn't happy about it. She's pissed that my boyfriend won't take the piano.

Young Adult 6:

My grandfather played the accordion and sang, which brought our family closer during the holidays. A few cousins played instruments, including the guitar and drums. One cousin in particular took the time to teach me the basics of guitar. From there, my

curiosity grew and I eventually learned to play the guitar, and still do to this day. Playing the guitar is therapeutic and allows me to relax and forget about the typical stresses in life.

Young Adult 7:

My brother taught himself the guitar but it has never been used in a way that has brought our family together.

Young Adult 8:

Music has survived through many generations in my family because of the joy it brings. My mom went to a Catholic school her whole life and was in choir. I was in choir too and played guitar. I have other family members that just love to sing and dance during family get gatherings and parties. I guess the fact that we all participate in things like that, brings us closer. Although not really related, I have played guitar since high school and have always loved music. Sometimes I would play songs for my family if they heard a song on the radio and make them laugh or smile with that.

Young Adult 9:

My family always used music as a means to bond. We always had music on all of the time. On weekends my mother would turn the music on at 6am and start cleaning the house. My siblings and I would sing and dance along as we helped clean. My dad would have the congas, bongos, or the guitar and play along with the music. It was a happy time for us and very memorable. During family gatherings we would make it a show!

Young Adult 10:

Just recently I went to a Bruce [Springsteen] concert with my mother, father, and my sister. It was for my mother's birthday and it was a blast! We have had a blast rocking

out to Springsteen for over ten years now. Of course when I was younger I never got the importance and the love of music but the older I get the more and more I appreciate the words and tunes of music.

**I have experienced the triggering of memories when I listen to music.** All of the young adults discussed the effect that music has on memories. More specifically, all ten of the participants reflected on family memories that involved music. For example, several participants implied music's effects on memories by sharing a family story that was triggered by a certain song, genre, or culture of music. Eight of the participants explicitly discussed the effect that music has on memories. For instance, one participant explicitly stated that when she listens to music she "relates back to [her] family or [her] friendships" (Young Adult 2). The selected quotes below demonstrate the effect that music has on memories.

Young Adult 1:

If I listen to a recording of me singing, it'll take me back to a place and I will feel—I will get really transfixed by it. And depending on what it is, I will start crying sometimes. If I listen to a certain opera song or a certain choral pieces—there's some beautiful choral piecing that's just like, *ahhh*, it gets your soul. I think I have a tango CD in my car, I have a salsa CD in my car, I drive to practicum for an hour and a half, and pop them in, and it brings me back to associations. So my tango CD I got when I was dating this Greek guy who I used to dance tango with—it was like a lifetime movie, it was ridiculous (laughing). It brings me back to there, like romance stuff. And with tango it's very sensual but like relaxed, and introspective. It makes me go inwards to myself when I listen to it, but with salsa music I, again, just get pumped up and excited. I think it brings out the attention whore-ish part of me. I like the performance parts of salsa because

people don't see me as this crazy person. I feel like I get to have that when I'm dancing salsa. Also, when I listen to Jewish or Ukrainian music it brings me back to my culture. It comes with all sorts of emotions of just like feeling at home—and also feeling sad because I miss some of those parts. And feeling like there's those connections you can't really explain, it just feels like its home.

Young Adult 2:

Depending on the song or the artist, different things come to mind when they play. Most of the music I hear relates back to my family or my friendships. I think about the memories of people or places that I have associated with certain songs, and sometimes hearing the song is the closest I'll get to those memories. That's why I will always cherish the music.

Young Adult 3:

Music is a way to forget the negatives in my life and it is also a connection to events. When I hear a song that reminds me of my high school days it always puts a smile on my face. I start to conjure up memories of times when life was a lot simpler. There are certain songs that have changed me emotionally. The songs I talked about before, "Somebody's Praying" and "On the Other Side," will always make me cry or tear up while listening. In contrast, songs such as "The Way or How Bizarre" bring memories that make me want to laugh out loud, remembering the times we used to roll down our windows and sing as loud as we could. Music has an effect on me in that it triggers my brain to relive difficult days as well as happy memories of my life. It just brings back memories. Good and bad ones. Anything that relates to a song usually comes back to memory when that particular song comes on. When "Heart of a Champion" comes on, it

reminds me of when I played basketball in high school. That also makes me feel sad because I'll never have those years back. Music always brings mixed emotions.

Young Adult 4:

Music sharply draws back into memory people and places and experiences—similar to how smells do, like home cooking or your first romantic partner's cologne bringing other parts of life flooding back in an instant. All of the experiences I've talked about before are the most meaningful. I suppose that's why I remember them so clearly and carry them with me fondly. They were meaningful because they were times that my family and I were able to, together, suspend whatever else was going on in our lives, and enjoy something wonderful that life has to offer. I've greatly appreciated our ability to do so and feel that it's gotten me through a lot in life. I don't know if my family members would ascribe similar meaning and credit to the music in our lives, but I'm guessing they would say it's been a big part of fond memories.

Young Adult 5:

I associate certain songs with vivid memories. Several years ago, I started getting my mom tickets to a musical performance, play, or musical instead of birthday and Christmas presents. Now we have lots of memories of trips into Philly together.

Young Adult 6:

The Beatles will forever remind me of my father, who passed away when I was younger. Their songs remind me that behind all the chaos that occurs in life, we have much to remember and be grateful for.

Young Adult 7:

Music is usually a soundtrack or memories from a trip or event. Certain songs and artists,

like the ones mentioned before, cause me to reflect upon my family when I hear them, I just realize how lucky we are to be together, to have shared time together, enjoying each other's company.

Young Adult 8:

Music is all around us and I am sure I am not the only one to embrace it. You can feel it and it can just describe the exact situation you are in at times. Just brings you back to an old memory. That is what makes it so relatable and enjoyable.

Young Adult 9:

It has kept the bond between the generations close. My father being one of 17 children and my mother being one of 19 children, there can sometimes be some distance in bonding but there hasn't. With music we stay close and keep in contact. We always share memories with each one another and they always go back to a family get together.

Young Adult 10:

Talking about music makes me happy and it makes me smile mainly because of all the other things that music mean to me. One song can bring back a feeling, a time in your life that you can't get back or even a person in your life that you can't get back. For me music means so much and I sometimes wonder how some people do not find it as important or relaxing as I do. My life without music would be a boring life.

**I found music to be meaningful during a holiday(s), tradition(s), or cultural or religious experience(s).** All of the participants were able to describe a holiday(s), tradition(s), or a cultural or religious experience(s) where music was used in the presence of family.

According to the participants, not only was music present at these events, but it also played a substantial role in the event's significance. For example, one participant noted that their family

developed a Christmas tradition, where she and her family make homemade movies that feature songs that capture their emotional experience. Some of the participants expressed feeling connected to their family, culture, or religion due to the use of specific music (e.g., “Russian-ish music,” “Italian mob music,” “Spanish music,” “music from the church,” “Christmas songs”). Other participants found that their family created traditions that revolved around music (e.g., attending concerts). Several of the participants found that they were able to understand their family member(s) better on a cultural or religious level. The selected quotes below demonstrate the depth and breadth of these meaningful experiences.

Young Adult 1:

That question is complicated for me only because of the immigration experience. It’s like trying to access memories from before I moved here—takes a bit more time. In some ways, I mean definitely listening to Ukrainian music, or Russian music, or Jewish music or Yiddish music, or whatever, brings me back to maybe a more simple time with my family. And it almost feels familiar like a home kind of feeling. So it has a cultural component to it as well. Then when I really think about it, I’ll think about a time I might have spent with my family—like I’ve gone to the opera with my grandparents before, I’ve gone to concerts with my family. It will bring me back to that. Yea I’m trying to think. I guess when I think about it, music has not been as much *in* my family but as much more *around* my family.

Young Adult 2:

The thing about music that produced meaning for my family cohesion is the different genres and varieties it comes in. Despite the loud holidays my family experiences



together, we always have music playing. The different types of music that are available to help set the mood make it a necessity to have at our family gatherings.

Young Adult 3:

Since I was young, I have gone to church every Sunday with my entire family. Things have changed recently but we still practice our faith on our own time. While growing up, my mom signed me and my brother up for the church choir. Through the church choir we met a woman who lived her life constantly surrounded by music. This woman taught us songs about God, but also songs that taught us how to live a good life. After church each Sunday, my mom would sing some of the songs from mass. As we got older, these songs helped us get through some of the hard times we faced. When my grandmother passed away, we sang songs at her funeral that we had learned in church. It helped ease the pain of her passing because we knew she would reach heaven. A song that was a great help was titled "On the Other Side." My brother recorded this song and played it alongside a video at her funeral. Every time we hear the song, we are reminded of my Grammy.

Young Adult 4:

My brother and I have established a holiday tradition, spanning back the past five years maybe, in which we create a home-made movie while home together for Christmas. These movies always include music because we feel that, no matter what we are conveying, music always says it best. We have such an appreciation for music and always seem able to agree on exactly which songs to use. It just feels right and we're on the same page.

Young Adult 5:

Christmas! Every year, we have music playing throughout the house. After opening

presents, still as adults, we sit around and watch the Christmas concerts on TV. When we watch a movie together, no one really talks. But when we listen to those concerts, we talk and laugh, and it feels so close.

Young Adult 6:

From childhood until a few years ago, holiday and family gatherings always culminated with my grandfather playing the accordion and singing. It was the first instrument I ever heard, and to this day, the sound of the accordion reminds of him. I can sing a dozen Hungarian songs thanks to him, and although I may not understand all of the words, the message the music conveys is clear.

Young Adult 7:

As our family is going through some changes, most specifically my mother's recent diagnosis of Alzheimer's, it was really nice to think back to all the time we have shared, and continue to share, together revolving around music. Going to concerts, vacations, spending time sitting together outside at the beach. I realize that most other families might not share the same musical traditions and interests, but it's definitely something that has brought my family together.

Young Adult 8:

Music has always been around my family and I. It is not just limited to the holidays, but the way music impacts us the most is around holiday time. We usually do some singing around the holidays in Spanish as a tradition and as a homage to my mom and how she grew up around it.

Young Adult 9:

During family gatherings or birthday parties we would put on a show. The family would

bring their musical instruments and start playing. Coming from Puerto Rico, we would sing a lot of folkloric songs which made the experience even better. I believe it made the experience better because of all of the family members participating and the younger generation would experience the older generation putting on a show and teaching us about our culture and music history.

Young Adult 10:

Every Christmas my mother always plays the same song when we get home on Christmas night. This is a song that her mother, who is not with us anymore, would play every Christmas. Since I was about 15-years-old, I have sat with my mother, looked at our beautiful tree, listened to her mother's favorite Christmas song and cried. I see how important this is to my mother. She misses her mother and one day I will miss mine just the same.

The six themes provide ways of achieving the first theme: the strengthening of intergenerational family cohesion through the use of music. The seven themes described above were explored in depth in the next chapter, along with the study's limitations.

## Chapter 5

### Discussion

#### General Themes

**How did the young adult experience bonding among/with family members through the use of music?** All ten of the participants were able to describe an experience where their family bonded over music. Music is particularly useful in the building of family cohesion because it bridges across cultural and generational gaps, and is a unifying force that brings people of different age groups and backgrounds together (Munro & Mount, 1978). Six of the participants explicitly described the bridging of generational and cultural gaps in their narratives. For example, one participant talked about bonding with their nine-year-old cousins over music. Another participant noted that he sang Hungarian songs with his grandfather despite not knowing the words. Regardless, this young adult stated that he this music held significance because the “message that the music conveyed was clear” (Young Adult 6). Music has also been found to strengthen bonds and social connections (Bakagiannis & Tarrant, 2006) and has assisted in the renegotiating of relationships (Arnett, 1995). All of the young adults described different ways of achieving greater cohesion with their families over music. Several of the participants described a rich cultural experience that they had with their family, of which music played a key part. Other experiences described by the young adults include the bonding of family members over one young adult’s participation in the choir, the bonding of family members over the making of a CD that contained their favorite summer songs, and growing emotionally closer to their father after listening to a James Taylor CD together. All of the experiences within their narratives varied, but all had one thing in common: the participants had observed the strengthening of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music.

What emerged from the narratives were seven general themes that provide answers to the specific question that this study was seeking to explore: how do young adults make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music?

**How did the young adults experience emotional and/or psychological change through the use of music?** Research has found that music is able to influence moods and stimulate the senses (Clements-Cortes, 2004). Music has also been shown to assist in the regulation of emotions; decrease depressive symptoms, anxiety, and social isolation (Munro & Mount, 1978). All ten of the young adults described personal emotional and psychological change due to the use of music. In addition, six participants described observed emotional change in their family members due to music. Music has also been shown to increase communication and self-expression (Salmon, 1993), and has been shown to enhance relaxation (Behne, 1997; Salmon, 1993). In six of the narratives, the participants described the relaxation that they experienced while listening to music or performing a musical piece. Two participants stated that they were unsure if music facilitated emotional or psychological change when asked the corresponding question (Appendix B). However, they made it abundantly clear throughout the rest of their narrative that they experienced emotional and psychological change through the use of music. Within the participants' narratives, each of these changes facilitated by music was seen in some form or another.

I believed that music served as a transitional object that allowed these young adults to experience emotional and psychological change (as well as the changes described in the above paragraph). Winnicott (1958) postulated that emotions are strongly influenced by music because music provides a safe field or transitional object in which an individual can work through emotional issues. Therefore, families could benefit from utilizing music because it fosters a

sense of safety for both the child and parent. For instance, when a parent and child are having conflict, music can be used to facilitate the expression of these difficult or unmet emotions in an effective and healthy way. A child or young adult may be more likely to utilize music to process something painful or difficult because it is a safe transitional object. In addition, a parent or child may provide comfort and support through the use of music (Munro & Mount, 1978) when they are unsure of how to otherwise. In fact, several young adults described the significant role that music played in the grieving and mourning process, particularly around the time of the funeral of the deceased.

All ten of the young adults mentioned emotional and/or psychological change that occurred in the presence of their family. It is noted that when (at least) two family members experience emotional or psychological change together simultaneously through the use of music, they experience—what this researcher refers to as—a shared emotional experience (SEE). I believe that SEE's strengthen family intergenerational solidarity when two people experience a deep level of emotional connectedness together. This connection or SEE, in turn, strengthens and reinforces the bond and connection that the members have.

**How did young adults experience the passing (up, down, laterally) of musical interest and/or skill among family members?** All of the participants experienced the transmission of musical interest and/or skill among family members. LeBlanc (1987) argues that people develop a preference for music partly because of the influence their family and peer group has on them. He reported that incidental conditioning of the listener and the opinions of the listener's family and peer group influences the individual's music preference decision. LeBlanc also noted that other social factors impact the individual's music preference, such as educators, authority figures, and the media. The young adults in this study noted that their

parents' and grandparents' taste and engagement with music highly impacted their own taste and engagement. Five of the participants reported that they had experienced the transmission of musical taste and/or talent from their grandparents, while all ten of the participants experienced the transmission from their parents.

All ten of the participants described the passing down (from parent to child, or grandparents to grandchild) of musical taste and/or talent. Nine of the young adults found that their family (parents or grandparents) passed onto them an interest in singing and performing, while all ten experienced the passing down of musical preference and taste. Five participants reported upward transmission (from child to parent) of musical taste. Eight of the participants mentioned that they bonded with their sibling(s) over music and two did so with their cousins. While eight of the young adults enjoyed music with their sibling, only five of them explicitly described the transmission of musical taste or talent to their sibling(s).

I contend that the passing down of music represents a deeper connection between family members, similar to culture. The passing down of musical preference and talent falls under cultural transmission. Bisin and Verdier (2001) note that “parents socialize and transmit their preferences to their offspring, motivated by a form of paternalistic altruism (“imperfect empathy”)” (p. 298). This study adds to Bisin and Verdier’s (2001) theory by arguing that a family develops their own culture, and that their preferred choice of music and emphasis on musical talent is a representation of their unique culture. All ten young adults mentioned a specific artist that their family bonded over, while seven mentioned a particular genre, and five mentioned a particular generation of music (e.g., “90s music”). Nine of the young adults named a particular song that had special significance with their family. Specifically, these nine young adults mentioned a cultural, religious, or holiday song that was particularly meaningful.

I believe that parents also transmit particular ways of using music. For example, some families used music to cope with a difficult event, while others used music to make a party more upbeat and lively. According to psychodynamic therapy perspectives (Levenson, 1995) parents tend to pass down patterns of relating. Therefore, this study believes that parents and grandparents transmit different ways to use music (e.g., to cope, to have fun, to bond) with their children. I believe that the more that families utilize music in positive ways, particularly to cope and to process emotions, the more psychologically healthy a young adult should be.

All ten the participants described passing down (or the plan to pass down) musical taste/talent to their children. In fact, one of these participants who described a desire to use music with their children stated that they would use it as an education tool. Regardless of the direction, the passing of musical preference and talent has shown to positively impact family cohesion.

**How did young adults experience strong emotional experiences with music (SEM's) in the presence of family?** Gabrielsson and Lindstrom Wik (2003) posit that individuals can have strong experiences with music (SEM). These SEM's most frequently occur in social settings with others being present. One author discovered that concerts in particular foster a profound sense of intimacy among fans and that no matter what one's background, the music affects everybody at the concert in the same emotional way (C. Swirsky, personal communication, November 24, 2008). Six young adults mentioned concerts in their responses, in addition to one participant who described the bonding of her family over her brother's performances. One of the six participants stated that they bonded with their family over Broadway shows. Gabrielsson and Lindstrom (1995) described seven factors that lead to an SEM: (a) physical responses, (b) quasi-physical responses, (c) perceptual aspects, (d) cognitive



transformation, (e) cognitive-emotional aspects, (f) emotional responses, and (g) transcendental and existential aspects. All ten of the participants touched on at least one of these factors.

Social appraisals are also important to take into account because it is difficult to appraise something without taking into account the social context from which it is experienced.

Appraisals that are influenced by the social context that one is a part of are referred to as social appraisals (Manstead & Fischer, 2001). Manstead and Fischer argue that social appraisals can happen two ways: (a) another person is part of the emotional event appraised or experienced; and (b) when we observe another's reactions to an emotional vent. Several participants described their observations regarding emotional and psychological change in a family member(s). Their observation may or may not have unconsciously impacted their subjective experience of the music/event.

All of the participants described an SEM that occurred in the presence of their family at some point in their narrative. One participant described the SEM that she experienced when driving home from her cousin's funeral with her immediate family, where they listened to "As long as I can see the light" by Creedence Clearwater Revival and hugged each other tightly. Another participant also described experiencing an SEM after a funeral. She talked about the SEM she had with her brother after their grandmother's funeral when they listened to a particular song that reminded them of her. A third participant also reported experiencing an SEM with their family after a funeral, noting that it peaceful, brought them closer, and helped take the pain away. One participant talked about the SEM they experience subsequent to the musical event itself, stating that they "excitedly share the details" of the performance over emails and texts the days following. Another participant discussed the SEM that occurred when he was a child while his parents would sing Beatles songs to him, and how he is still reminded of this shared

experience when he hears certain songs.

I believe that SEMs experienced in the presence of family positively impacts family cohesion. In addition—as mentioned in the section about emotional and/or psychological change—this researcher believes that if two people (and in this case, family members) experience similar SEMs together simultaneously, they will experience a SEE. This deep emotional connection facilitated by music leads to a deeper connection between the participants (or family members). These results indicate that family members could use music to facilitate SEE's which, in turn, strengthens the bond that they have. Lewis, Amini, and Lannon (2001) developed a theory referred to as limbic resonance which argues that humans have the capacity for sharing deep emotional states that arise from the limbic system of the brain. In addition, these theorists posit that our capacity for empathy and non-verbal connection (present in animals) forms the basis of social connection, as well as various modes of therapy and healing. This researcher argues that limbic resonance occurs within SEEs triggered by SEMs. Ways to achieve a SEM and SEEs could be by attending concerts or other live music events; playing a particular genre, CD, or song while in the car during the morning drive to school or family vacations; or by one or all of the members engaging in some type of musical performance (see next section).

**How did young adults experience the bonding of their family members over a musical performance and/or the use of a musical instrument?** The narratives of the young adults highlight the positive affect that being a part of or observing a musical performance has on individuals and among family members. Although research on the use of music within families found that music had a positive affect on the relationship between family members when the members of different generations performed together (e.g., in a choir, using free improvisation;

Hibben, 1992; Shoemark, 1996), this study found that neither, one, or both of the family members could participate in the performance in order for the relationship to benefit from it. In this study, all ten of the participants experienced a sense of deeper connection with their family member(s) when one of the members performed a musical piece or practiced a particular musical instrument. Six of the participants personally performed or played an instrument themselves at one point in their life or another. All ten of the participants observed another family member performing or playing an instrument. One member reported the use of a musical instrument in their family but denied that it had any effect on the cohesion between the family members.

**How did the young adults experience the triggering of memories when they listened to music?** All ten of the participants discussed the effect that music has on memories. Eight of the participants explicitly discussed the effect that music has on memories. For instance, one participant explicitly stated that music had a similar effect to the sense of smell—“like home cooking or your first romantic partner’s cologne bringing other parts of life flooding back in an instant” (Young Adult 4). All ten of the participants reflected on family memories that involved music. For example, several participants implied music’s effects on memories by sharing a family story that was triggered by a certain song, genre, or culture of music. Each time a memory is triggered, so are the SEM and SEE. This, in turn, reinforces and even strengthens the connection to the person/people that the young adult was with at the time of the SEM and SEE.

**How did young adults find the use of music to be meaningful during a holiday(s), tradition(s), or cultural or religious experience?** All of the participants described the use of music during a holiday(s), tradition(s), or cultural or religious experience. The descriptions of these experiences in the young adults’ narratives indicate that the use of music during the holidays, traditions, or cultural or religious experiences positively impacts the relationship

among family members. Several young adults mentioned holiday rituals, while others talked about family gatherings that culminated around musical instruments and singing. Several young adults referenced concerts as a part of their tradition with a particular family member.

Regardless of the holiday, tradition, or cultural or religious experience, the young adult experienced the strengthening of their family cohesion over the music used during these events.

There are several reasons that the use of music during holidays, traditions, and/or religious experiences helped strengthen the bond among family members. As mentioned above, songs are remembered in memories and memories are triggered by songs. Each time a young adult hears a specific song or thinks of a particular memory, they recollect the social context from which this experience was a part (Gabrielsson & Lindstrom Wik, 2003), as well as the SEE they had experienced and the people they experienced it with. This reinforces the positive association they have with their family and in turn, strengthens the connection that the young adult has with their family members. All ten of the participants described being with their family and feeling a strong connection during these experiences. This researcher argues that the bonding of the family members during these experiences was mostly facilitated by the use of music. In conclusion, each time the specific song or type of music is heard, similar to a smell, the young adult is reminded of the past which creates a deeper connection to the positive family memory, or SEE, and the members in general.

### **Study's Limitations**

Due to the inherent limits of an IPA several additional concerns regarding the young adults' experience materialized. This study had only ten participants because it sought to examine the lived experiences of the participants. However, because there were only ten participants, it makes the study difficult to generalize to the greater population. In addition, it

would be useful to have a more diverse group of participants. In this study, eight of the young adults identified as Caucasian and two identified as Hispanic. To assess for cross-cultural similarities and differences, it would be useful to include other ethnic and racial cultural groups.

Another limitation was that this study examined a small sample of a broad phenomenon. For instance, this researcher chose to study the young adult developmental stage, as opposed to interviewing people of any age. It could be useful to interview teenagers, as well as people above the age of seventy to see if their responses differed in anyway.

A third limitation that certainly influenced the study is the researcher's strong bias toward music, particularly utilizing it within her family. This project attempted to address this bias by discussing it in Chapter 2. However, perhaps the bias consciously or unconsciously influenced the young adults' responses.

### **Future Implications**

This study has several implications for the future. First, family therapists have more evidence to use music as a way to bring families together, particularly those consisting of members from different generations. Whether families use music in therapy (similar to music therapy) or recommend families to use it at home, music will help facilitate the cohesion of members from different generations. Individual therapists can also recommend it to the individual they are working with, whether it is a parent, a child, or even a young adult. Therapists can offer a variety of ways for this music to be used, given that the young adults in this study described a range of experiences. For example, parents can be encouraged to play certain music (e.g., their favorite band, favorite song, and cultural music) on the way to school, family vacation, or particular relative's house. In addition, parents can be encouraged to play music in the house when their children return home from school, during holidays or cultural,

religious, or traditional experiences, or before bed. The young adults in this study noted that they found music to be particularly helpful when they experienced a death. Therefore, parents can also utilize music during these difficult times to assist in the processing of emotions and to help facilitate the strengthening of their connection and support for one another. The young adults also stated that they experienced attending concerts with their family members to be particularly meaningful. This suggests that parents and grandparents take their children to musical experiences, such as concerts, as a way of bonding with their children and creating memories that will last for a lifetime.

Second, educators and those in the school system, such as school psychologists, can encourage students and their families to use music to strengthen their cohesion. During times of hardship and distress, families can utilize this inexpensive and easily accessible tool to develop and/or maintain their close connection.

Third, this research has shown that the use of instruments in the family—whether one person or more uses it—can influence not only the person playing the instrument but the family members who observe this individual. When one member plays an instrument, it can create a SEM and a SEE among the family members.

Lastly, this research sheds light on how music influences so many aspects of people's and more specifically, families' lives. Similar to family meals, this research has shown that music can positively impact the cohesion of family members on a daily basis. In addition, similar to family meals, families can utilize music to develop routines, provide time for emotional processing and communication, and can serve to provide SEE's with music. Ideally, this research inspires families to integrate music into their lives similar to their family meals. Even better would be if they played the music during their family meals! In order for families to

become more aware of the positive effects of music, therapists and educators need to be more aware themselves and need to encourage their students, parents, and families to utilize music in creative ways.

### **Conclusion**

Music has been around since ancient times and continues to influence people in such significant ways. This study hopes to be a source of encouragement to utilize music in more ways, whether that is using it with your family to strengthen bonds, or to simply enjoy yourself on a beautiful day. People encounter music in a variety of ways daily (e.g., television, stores, ring tone, Ipod) but they do not often take the time to consider the role that it plays in their lives. Furthermore, they rarely consider the ways in which music influences their intergenerational family solidarity.

It has been and always will be important to remain close with family. According to this study, music can be used in a variety of ways to facilitate the strengthening of cohesion among family members regardless of their generation. It may be difficult to persuade a family to come in for therapy together; therefore, music can be used as a therapeutic tool without the users thinking of music that way. The young adults in this study described ways that music was able to cross both cultural and generational boundaries, and helped people come together over a common passion.

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## **Appendix A**

### **Informed Consent**

My name is Keri Petrone and I am a fifth-year clinical psychology doctoral student at Antioch University in Keene, New Hampshire. I am conducting a research study as part of my dissertation. In this study, I will be exploring how young adults make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music. Your participation in this study is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the study or refrain from answering any questions that make you feel uncomfortable at any time without penalty.

The goal of this study is to gain insight into how young adults make meaning of their family intergenerational solidarity through the use of music. This study explores the effects music has on family cohesiveness, as well as an individual's emotional and psychological well-being. The significance of this study will help researchers understand ways to strengthen family cohesiveness. This study hopes to provide insightful ways to increase support—through strengthening family cohesiveness—to the growing aging population. In addition, this research seeks to inspire families to utilize this cheap, accessible, creative, and multiculturally sensitive tool to build cohesion and bond. Last, this research will hopefully assist in the bonding of parents with their teens during, for example, stressful times such as negotiating separation.

Participants will consist of young adults who use music within their family in some meaningful way. The participants must be between the ages of 20 and 30. There are no gender requirements. There will be no cost for participating in this research. Participants will not be paid to participate in this research project.

Inclusion criteria include: (1) Young adults (age 20-30) who use music within their family in some meaningful way, and (2) must have an ability and willingness to reflect on experiences with their family, as well as their emotional and psychological change facilitated by music.

Exclusion criteria include: (1) An inability or lack of willingness to reflect on emotional and psychological change brought on by the use of music within one's family.

Before participation begins, patients will be interviewed over the phone or in person to ensure eligibility. If eligible, researcher and participants will then decide on a specific time and location to meet. During this meeting, the researcher will carefully review informed consent with the participants. Next, the participants will have a 45 – 90 minute semi-structured interview. The semi-structured interview will consist of 12 main questions. The interview will be audio-taped by the researcher, recorded verbatim, and later transcribed for data analysis. If the interview extends beyond the allotted time, we will most likely set up a second interview.

After the interview is complete, you will have one additional opportunity to meet with me for 30 minutes to 1 hour. During this time, I will share the transcript and results with you. You may review the transcript and results for accuracy or to withdraw any particular comment which you do not want to appear in the public domain.

If you agree to participate in this study, the results may be published in my doctoral dissertation, a professional journal, or presented at professional meetings. In order to ensure confidentiality, all names and locations will remain anonymous. Raw and processed data will be locked in a

secure location/password protected. Your identifiable information will not be shared unless required by law or you give written permission. The only people that will have access to your information are myself and research team. The information provided will help researchers and clinicians in the mental health field, and others to better understand how to provide quality services for parents and children.

The benefit of participating in this study is the opportunity to discuss feelings, perceptions, and concerns related to the use of music to strengthen of your family intergenerational solidarity. Discussing this experience may help you gain important insight into the importance of music and its effect on individual emotional and psychological well-being.

There is one possible risk which is that emotions may be brought up when discussing meaningful experiences with families; therefore, as mentioned in the requirements, the young adult must be able to handle conversations and reflections of experiences with their family. The benefits of exploring one's own emotional and psychological changes that occurred through the use of music, as well as the opportunity to explore their family cohesion facilitated by the use of music appears to outweigh the potential for risk. One does not typically have the chance to explore the nuanced ways in which music facilitated the bonding between family members of different generations. This study would provide a space for the participant to gain insight into their family's use of music, as well as the idiosyncratic ways in which music impacted their emotional and/or psychological well-being. The researcher will take the appropriate measures to ensure that the interview is conducted in a sensitive and professional manner. Additional services (e.g., follow-up contact with participants and a list of referrals) will be provided to address any

emotional impact the participant might have experienced from participating in this study.

Again, you have the right to withdraw from the study or refrain from answering any questions that make you feel uncomfortable at any time without penalty.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at my email: [kpetrone@antioch.edu](mailto:kpetrone@antioch.edu)

Keri Petrone

40 Avon Street

Keene, NH 03431

xxx-xxx-xxxx

If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please call or write:

Dr. Katherine Clark

Chair of Antioch University New England IRB

[kclark@antioch.edu](mailto:kclark@antioch.edu)

Dr. Melinda Treadwell

Vice President of Academic Affairs AUNE

[mtreadwell@antioch.edu](mailto:mtreadwell@antioch.edu)

Consent statement:

I have read and agreed to the above information. I understand that participating is voluntary, and I have the right to withdraw at any time. I completely understand the risks involved in this study. All of my questions have been answered. I have been given a duplicate copy of this informed consent.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Subject

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Subject name (printed)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Researcher

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

## Appendix B

### Interview Questions

1. What does music mean to you?
2. Did your family use or come together around music in anyway?
3. What experiences do you remember where music played a role in your family interactions?
4. What is the most meaningful experience(s) that you recall where your family cohesion was strengthened through music?
5. How has music influenced your family cohesion/the relationship between your family members between generations?
6. What about music produced meaning for your family cohesion between generations?
7. Has music changed you (emotionally and/or psychologically) and/or your family in any way?
8. What musicians, artists, bands, or songs have special meaning for you?
9. Did anyone play music or sing in your family? How did that contribute to your family cohesion?
10. When this certain musician, artist, band, or song plays, what comes up for you (feelings, visceral reactions, thoughts about yourself, your past, your present, and your life in general)?
11. How do you intend to use music with your own family in the future?
12. Young adults are invited to say anything they wish concerns music increasing their family intergenerational solidarity, psychology, change, or anything at all.

## Appendix C

### Demographic Questionnaire

Date of birth: \_\_\_\_\_

Gender Identity: Woman  
 Transgender  
 Man  
 Self-identify (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Sex at birth: Woman  
 Man  
 Intersex

Sexual attraction: Only attracted to men  
 Mostly attracted to men  
 Equally attracted to men and women  
 Only attracted to women  
 Mostly attracted to women  
 Not sure

Sexual orientation: Heterosexual  
 Lesbian  
 Gay  
 Bisexual  
 Questioning  
 Self-identify (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Race/ethnicity: Asian American/Asian  
 African American/Black  
 American Indian or Alaskan Native  
 Hispanic/Latina(o)  
 Native American or Pacific Islander  
 Multi-racial  
 White  
 Self-identify (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_

Education: \*specify highest level of education received (or in progress)

High school: \_\_\_\_\_  
 College (please specify: BA, BS, and/or Associates): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Graduate school (please specify major and level of degree): \_\_\_\_\_



Profession: \_\_\_\_\_

Culture(s) you identify with: \_\_\_\_\_