THE EVOLVING SELF: A CASE STUDY

UTILIZING MUSIC LYRICS TO

STUDY EGO IDENTITY

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ABSTRACT

Musicians have written about developmental transitions and the associated struggles for as long as language has been acquired and they have had the means by which to document their lyrics. Modern lyricists have ached about childhood and yearned for home as they enter young adulthood, while others have been preoccupied with romantic interests gained and lost during adolescence and beyond. Some musicians have even delved into questioning social issues, theological paradigms, decisions made by governments, and moral dilemmas in lyrics. Regardless of the developmental crisis being discussed, lyrics have been a medium in which musicians have publicly wrestled with their existential existence. Unfortunately, there is lack of representation in analyzing musical lyrics and other forms of pop culture for personality development in psychological research. This study illustrates a procedure for coding manifestations of three psychosocial stages in music lyrics from an artist's first album to the most recent album. More specifically, identity, intimacy, and generativity themes were analyzed in John Mayer's lyrics written during his adolescence, young adulthood, and emerging middle adulthood. Erik Erikson's psychosocial stage theory is utilized to explain Mayer's personality at the time each album was released and the development of personality over time. Psychosocial patterns were found at the macro (i.e. stage sequencing) and micro (i.e. MAMA cycles) levels in Mayer's lyrics. Moreover, the findings are consistent with seminal and modern Eriksonian research, whereas a novel intimacy sequencing pattern was discovered.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND

Philosophers have struggled to understand and demarcate the human experience since the dawn of time. Why am I here? What is my purpose? Who am I? Larger questions regarding the meaning of life and existential existence have evolved into tighter, more refined scientific inquiries into the development of the self. What are the inherited traits and environmental mechanisms that contribute to the development of individual personality, and how does time operationalize expected epochs of growth? Researchers have been able to identify sensitive periods (e.g. early childhood, adolescence, emerging adulthood) throughout the life course that are more influential in the construction of self than other phases of life. Growth beckons change and change requires disequilibration. The abovementioned sensitive periods initiate and foster developmental shifts through a reciprocal dance of genetic and environmental factors. The research of the self has split into two discrete lines of study, self psychology and ego psychology. While self psychology scholars are primarily concerned with the case of the self, ego psychologists chiefly study the construct of identity. Nowhere is the identity perspective more seminal and evident than in the work of Erik Erikson.

During the course of Erikson's career, he developed one of the most generative life-span theories that framed the human experience from birth to death in sequential, predictable age related stages. He expanded and extended Sigmund Freud's personality theory with the development of his eight stage psychosocial lifespan model. He believed human personality develops throughout the life course by successfully resolving a series of universally sequential

1

crises. One of Erikson's most important contributions to the field of human development was his understanding that adolescence marked a significant turning point from childhood to adulthood, and the changes that occur during the transition endure well into middle and late adulthood. Furthermore, he was the first to identify how identity formation begins at birth, reaches a fever pitch in adolescence, and continues to evolve throughout adulthood. For the purposes of this study, three of his eight stages were analyzed (identity, intimacy, and generativity). The identity versus role confusion crisis occurs during adolescence from about 12 to 18 years of age. During this phase of life, individuals explore their sense of self and personal identity by evaluating their personal beliefs, goals, and values. The sixth stage of Erikson's model, intimacy versus isolation occurs during young to middle adulthood from approximately 18 to 40 years of age. The intimacy crisis is marked by developing loving, intimate relationships with others, while the generativity versus stagnation crisis happens in midlife from about 40 to 65 years of age. The primary task that arises during this stage is leaving a legacy, which is achieved by a decrease in self preoccupation and an increase in guiding the next generation. Although there are many suitable theories of personality development, Erikson's theory profoundly articulates the challenges of adolescence and adulthood, and methodically defines stages of development across the lifespan.

Identity Research Methods

Most identity development research is conducted utilizing orthodox methods (e.g., interviews, surveys, assessments). While data collected via interview can be significant, there are limitations to its validity (Newman & Benz, 1998). And while some identity measurements can elaborate on specific processes within the construct (i.e. identity statuses), it is difficult, if not impossible to retain the fullness of Erikson's theory without the subtle and delicate elements

being lost (Kroger, 2017). The methods used in this study preserved the principal themes as well as the understated features within Erikson's theory by assessing ego identity qualitatively. Furthermore, the coded qualitative data provided frequency distributions that were analyzed quantitatively to assess development over time. Two studies (Stewart, Franz, & Layton, 1988; Peterson & Stewart, 1990) unconventionally coded personal documents as a means by which to comprehend and track identity formation. Stewart and colleagues coded Vera Brittain's diary entries, letters of correspondence, and autobiography primarily for themes of identity and intimacy, while Peterson and Stewart coded Brittain's diary entries and fictional novels she had written later in life primarily for themes of generativity. While these two sets of researchers sought to identify specific stages of psychosocial development, in fact, all three psychosocial stages (identity, intimacy, and generativity) were coded in each study. Peterson and Stewart believed coding Brittain's fictional novels not only contained self-descriptive statements, but also provided insight into personal generative products. Thus, the findings were twofold, because fictional novels are a legacy future generations will be able to access while also being a goldmine of data. Several authors (Allport, 1942; Hevern, 1999; Wrightsman, 1981) have emphasized the importance of using personal documents in research; however, this method is relatively underutilized. The systematic analysis of personal documents over the course of time during the transition from adolescence to adulthood is an ideal approach to study personality development, because it is nonreactive, pragmatic, and it takes advantage of existing data resources (Stewart et al., 1988).

Stewart and colleagues' (1988) and Peterson and Stewart's (1990) approach to studying identity development in the late 1980s and early 1990s did not end there. Others have continued to study personal documents to identify identity development. In a more recent study, Chiu

3

(2015) examined personal statements of doctoral student applicants to assess how writer identity is constructed during the admissions process, and found that writer identity is associated with writer positioning, sensitivity to target audience, and writing context. Moreover, Chiu believed the findings have implications for future research to investigate the various and implicit characteristics of personal statements across disciplines.

Although modern Eriksonian research is significant, for the purposes of this study, the focus was the universal identity characteristics Erikson proposed, still as relevant today as they were when the paradigm was first introduced (Stewart et al., 1988). That is, Stewart and colleagues suggest that it is one of the pioneering theories that supported the idea that identity achievement is the primary turning point that marks the transition from childhood to adulthood. Moreover, the process of identity resolution in late adolescence and early adulthood implies significant developmental changes that endure throughout the lifespan. In this study, Erikson's stages were explored in one musician's work.

Purpose of the Study

For the purpose of this study, Erikson's stages were considered categorically to explain personality development. As previously discussed, the three aforementioned psychosocial stages beginning in adolescence and ending in midlife were assessed in the current study. The coding system that was used in this study was utilized in Stewart and colleagues' (1988) and Peterson and Stewart's (1990) studies. In as much, identity, intimacy, and generativity may be expressed in music lyrics while also being a personal generative product. Specific methods used in this study will be discussed in Chapter 3.

Research Question

The purpose of this study was to answer the following question: Is John Mayer's

psychosocial development (identity, intimacy, and generativity) evident in the lyrics of his albums (n = first album released in 2001, most recent album to be released in 2017)? A secondary purpose of this study was to determine whether Stewart, Franz, and Layton's (1984) method of coding is appropriate for examining Erikson's theory in music lyrics.

Limitations and Significance

Limitations

Two limitations exist in the study. First, although case study design is considered to be acceptable when charting an original research path, there are several disadvantages. Although dispelled by Kvale (1992), qualitative research is subjective and inherently bias. However, some negative effects of researcher bias can be mitigated by implementing quantitative elements into the design. It is recognized and accepted that this study may not have as much perceived methodological power as a quantitative study. Case study findings are also difficult to generalize to a wider population (Yin, 1989). That is, the findings from this analysis may not be generalizable to *all* artists. However, case studies are not meant to have high external validity. Instead they allow thorough exploration of complex questions and support previous research, while they also provide a foundation and inform future research. That said, the procedure with which this study was conducted, including coding categories was explicitly stated within the study, making replication quite possible. Further, since the secondary purpose of this study was realized (i.e., the coding suggested by Stewart and colleagues applicability to music lyrics), the argument can be made that while the conclusions from this study may not be generalizable beyond this artist, the methods can be applied beyond this artist.

Second, human personality is a multifaceted construct that is not easily explained, yet alone measured. It is reasonable to posit that Erikson's psychosocial stage theory has come the

closest to accurately and comprehensively describing the human experience from birth to death. However, Erikson's theory has been difficult to quantitatively test, because of its universal complexity and individual application. That said, biographical case studies were Erikson's preferred method for testing his theory as he researched and published books on both Martin Luther (1962) and Mahatmas Gandhi (1969). Case study research may be the optimal design for testing Erikson's theory; however, it is often expensive and time consuming. For example, in the current study, each lyrical line required 19 codings for the discrete subcategories nested within each of the three psychosocial stages (e.g. sameness and continuity, identifications, secure identity, shared identity, caring, productivity). Although case study design can be a cumbersome approach, other methodological approaches do not have the same advantages when studying complex psychological concepts.

Significance

Scholarly literature is deficient in the methodological approach of using personal documents to better understand and explain development. Moreover, pop culture is often overlooked and underutilized in favor of more orthodox data resources. Movies, television, music, and other pop culture mediums are an enduring and ubiquitous aspect of the human experience that are rarely studied in psychological research. The aforementioned data resource of personal documents is an underutilized gold mine that can aid in the field's effort in describing the human experience. This study opens the door for future research and also charts a significant and innovative path in developmental scholarship. Furthermore, there is a need for more case study research in psychological literature, as group focus and/or experimental design are overrepresented. Findings in the current study support the relevancy of Erikson's theory, and thus, offer several possible lines for future research. Stewart and colleagues (1988) wrote, "It is

clear, though, that these issues—what is universal and what is individual, what is dependent on external circumstances and what is internally controlled, and what the course of identity formation is like at various points—deserves further theoretical and empirical attention" (p. 72). The current study identified identity formation at various points, because identity formation was coded and analyzed over a 17-year period at seven discrete points in time. The coded data spanned a longer period of time with 17 years in comparison to the three years in the Stewart et al. study. Therefore, the study not only etched a novel course in the literature but also offers direction for future research while tying into and elaborating previous research.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following theoretical framework will discuss how music lyrics are an appropriate

medium to study personality development and identify significant research that support the need

for the current study. First, music and its link to measurable psychosocial change will be

discussed. Second, the review will demarcate Erikson's three psychosocial stages (identity,

intimacy, and generativity) that were analyzed in the current study. Third, relevant modern

identity literature, the standard methods that have been utilized, the various outcomes common in

young adults and their importance in understanding functioning in adulthood will be reviewed.

Finally, contemporary studies that have looked at how music plays a role in expressions of the

self and psychological categorization of others will be mentioned.

Music, Lyrics and Psychology

Few human experiences can evoke such profound memories and associated emotions as

music. Although attending a well-produced concert of a known musical act can be a powerful

and surreal way to spend an evening, other seemingly benign musical interactions can seduce

analogous effects. Recent studies (Baird & Sampson, 2009; El Haj, Postal, & Allain, 2012;

Rohani, Hailstone, & Warren, 2012) have looked at the relationship between music, memory

recall, and emotion in Alzheimer's patients and the results are promising. Baird and Sampson

(2009) found that the emotional/arousal effects that occurred when listening to music was

associated with enhanced autobiographical recall, while El Haj et al. (2012) discovered

autobiographical recall was improved in Alzheimer's patients who chose their own music to

listen to in comparison to silence. Furthermore, musical semantic memory can be moderately preserved when other severe impairments in other cognitive domains (i.e. language and episodic memory) occur (Rohani et al., 2012). Music appears to be transcendent. What is it about listening to music during our formative years that seems to be so intricately woven into our meaningful past? It is as if we are simultaneously engaged in something personally unique and individually transformative, and yet, we are connected through shared experience. It is difficult to articulate; however, it is naturally known. It may be said that how we experience music may be suggestive of the ways in which we develop individually (e.g. identity formation) and universally (e.g. crawling, walking, talking). If receiving music is developmentally significant, is it appropriate to question whether creating it may have equal importance? What are the elements in a song that we connect with? It would be difficult to dispute that melodies do not endure over the course of time, and the musical notes that come to life through rhythm and meter probably serve as anchor points in our memories. That said, it is the lyrical content that we attach to and associate with. Often times, musicians write about personal experiences that are also universally understood, and it beckons our attention. Maybe the lyric articulates an emotional state or developmental struggle in words that we could not have otherwise formulated. Whatever the reason may be, there is a noteworthy association between music and lyrics, and artist and consumer. That said, not every lyric is going to be written about a developmental phenomenon, and thus, may not be appropriate material to analyze. Moreover, some musicians are not going to have as much lyrical sophistication as others, and they may be more interested in the notes on a page instead of the words. For example, the following lyric was written by Noel Gallagher (1994) from the British band, Oasis:

I know a girl called Elsa, She's into Alka Seltzer, She sniffs it through a cane, On a

supersonic train, She made me laugh, I got her autograph. (track 6)

It would be difficult to code the abovementioned lyric for Eriksonian themes or any other psychological construct. The members of Oasis are talented musicians; however, lyrics can be meaningless, inspired by drug use, or merely words strung together because they rhyme. Further, Gallagher is part of a musical group along with his brother, Liam, and it would challenging, if not impossible to analyze and discuss individual development when there may be musical and lyrical input from several members of the band. Conversely, some lyrics written by solo artists are worth analyzing for evidence of psychological development. The following lyrical example is a chorus written by David Bowie (1971):

> Ch-ch-ch-ch-Changes, Turn and face the strange, Ch-ch-Changes, Don't tell them to grow up and out of it, Ch-ch-ch-ch-changes, Turn and face the strange, Ch-ch-changes, Where's your shame, You've left us up to our necks in it, Time may change me, But you can't trace time. (track 1)

Bowie's lyric has explicit preoccupation with self vis-à-vis the developmental changes that are brought on by the passing of time and the internal struggle that comes with it, making it suitable data to analyze. That said, a single chorus would not provide adequate data to assess change over time since development occurs slowly, nor would an entire song or album be completely sufficient as either would only represent a chapter in a larger narrative. In order to adequately assess personal development over time in a musician through the medium of lyrics, it would be imperative to analyze most of their discography. Additionally, the albums within the discography would need to be written and released during the age appropriate psychosocial stages beginning with adolescence. Moreover, song lyrics as a window into personality only works when the writer is clear and that he/she is known to be serious about their craft.

Self and Identity

Before discussing Erik Erikson's theory, it is important to briefly establish how the research of the self has resulted in two distinct areas of study, that is, self psychology in the case of the self, and ego psychology in the instance of identity (Côté, 2009). Neither concept, self or identity are easily defined; however, it may be helpful to attempt to distinguish the two lines of literature by outlining how researchers in each area of study have demarcated the two concepts. "In the literature on the self, the self is defined in terms of consciousness, reflective awareness, and stimulated self-regulation," while "identity refers to the sameness and continuity of the person's psychological functioning, interpersonal behavior, and commitments to roles, values, and beliefs" (Côté, 2009, p. 267). Each have distinct processes, content, and structures. Self organization involves a process of constant evaluation of how one is perceived by others in various social spheres, which shapes self concepts as relational autonomy and interdependence is understood (Côté, 2009). Conversely, the identity formation process is primarily concerned with strengthening the ego by evaluating the continuity of functioning over time across various social contexts. As continuity is appraised, social roles, personal identifications, and shared values become internalized into stable role configurations (Côté, 2009). The salient distinction between the two lines of research is that identity has been primarily concerned with the formation and development of the self, while self psychology has placed more emphasis on the preservation of self-structures and identities (Côté, 2009). Erikson suggested that the human personality is made up of several "specific" selves that encompass a "global self," each of which corresponds to the social roles the individual has developed and executed (Côté, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the development of self over time was analyzed utilizing Erikson's theory.

Erik Erikson

Human personality became a significant psychological paradigm when Sigmund Freud first introduced his triarchic theory (i.e. id, ego and superego) in the late 19th century. Neo-Freudian, Erik Erikson expanded the study of personality when he established a foothold in the field with his eight stage psychosocial theory. Erikson posited that in order for human beings to best mature, they must first resolve the corresponding crisis for the developmental stage in which they reside. "Their crises in childhood; however, and their impairment in adulthood are clearly circumscribed" (Erikson, 1980, p. 58). Therefore, unresolved crises from childhood and/or adolescence have long lasting ramifications that can span the human life. Erikson's theory revolutionized human development with keen insights into how personality unfolds across the lifespan through the growth of ego identity. No theory before explained the human experience from birth to death with adolescence marking the significant developmental transition from childhood to adulthood. Subsequent human developmental researchers have either elaborated and expanded Erikson's original work or rejected so-called "grand" theoretical frameworks to guide their scholarship (Côté, 2009).

Identity

Identity formation begins with the neonate's initial psychosocial relationship with the primary caregiver; and it continues to evolve and strengthen through the resolution of crises in corresponding developmental stages through reciprocal interaction in familial, peer, communal, cultural, and societal realms. Therefore, crises in adult stages, analogous to childhood stages, resemble the quintessential universal demands on an individual at approximately the same age by physical growth, psychological development, and societal expectations (Stewart et al., 1988). The identity crisis formalizes when childhood ends and puberty begins. With the rapid cognitive

growth puberty incites, a host of secondary changes occur during adolescence in person

perception, moral reasoning, understanding social phenomena, and so on. As a set, the individual

begins to see the cross-currents of society and one's place in it. Questions of fit, satisfaction

with the path one has been put on follow. The beliefs and values of the child assumed from the

parental unit no longer suffice as the adolescent searches for answers to questions that have not

yet been asked. Furthermore, adolescence is marked by the disruption of the sameness and

continuity that held steadfast throughout childhood. As the quest for newfound sameness and

continuity begins, the adolescent attempts to resolve the crisis by experimenting with novel

social roles. The identity process demands the adolescent temporarily assume the various values

of the group until they are able to resolve which beliefs and subsequent roles fit. Unsuccessful

identity resolution can negatively impact future relationships (intimacy) and successful

resolution of subsequent stages (generativity). Research specifies two processes that are

significant for identity formation: the examination of alternative values, beliefs, and occupational

goals, and a subsequent commitment to the aforementioned chosen set of alternatives (Marcia,

2010). The identity formation process has been researched extensively by Marcia and followers;

however, other scholars have broadened the understanding of the process by studying how

external factors shape identity. For example, researchers have looked at the relationship between

psychosocial change and student development and the findings are mixed. Although studies have

found the percentage of college students who could be classified as having an identity

achievement status increases from freshman to senior year, it has been challenging for

researchers to identify whether the increase is attributed to the college experience or other

maturational or sociocultural forces (Côté, 2009). Other scholars have studied the role family

plays in the identity formation process mostly emphasizing parenting styles, and they found that

adolescents who are allowed the most psychological autonomy while also abiding by parental direction, show the most positive outcomes in many avenues of functioning (Côté, 2009). As for gender, males are more likely to be in foreclosed or diffuse statuses, while females are more likely to be identity achieved or in moratorium (Côté, 2009). However, Kroger (2003) found that gender role orientation was a better predictor of differences in resolutions to questions regarding moral reasoning, identity, and intimacy in comparison to gender type. Regardless of the various ways identity has been studied, research has generally supported Erikson's model with one significant exception, the timetable; the majority of identity formation now occurs in late adolescence, and possibly not even until young adulthood (Steinberg & Morris, 2001). Moreover, the literature is scant concerning identity formation in early adulthood, apart from college students who have been treated as late adolescents (Côté, 2009). The current study will aid in the field's understanding of the identity formation process in young adulthood, because self-preoccupations in the Eriksonian tradition was evaluated over a 17-year period beginning when the artist was in his early 20s.

Intimacy

Erikson (1980) believed genuine intimacy with the opposite sex or any other person was only possible once a reasonable sense of identity had been established. Without a clear sense of identity, it is possible for young adults to become overly dependent on their partners or have a fear of committing to a long-term relationship (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Recent research has supported Erikson's finding. For example, Montgomery (2005) discovered that higher levels of intimacy were related to a stronger sense of identity. Thus, the journey for intimacy optimally begins following the achievement of identity; however, the path for resolution of the identity and intimacy crises differs between men and women (Arseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2009).

14

The findings are mixed, though, as most career-oriented women and men resolve the identity crisis before addressing intimacy issues (Dyk & Adams, 1990), while some women resolve the intimacy crisis before identity issues by marrying and rearing children (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Other women address both identity and intimacy issues concurrently (Dyk & Adams, 1990). Young adulthood is a time in which a sexual partner is sought with whom life can be shared. Although sexual intimacy is part of the equation, the primary drive is for companionship and mutual psychological understanding. Moreover, intimacy involves sharing an identity with another and refers to the psychological relationship, which usually has a physical component; however, it may not (Marcia, 2010). Deprivation of intimacy can lead to a status of isolation. One of the most common intermediate intimacy-isolation patterns that have been demarcated by research is the pseudo-intimate in which the relationship is insincere and predictable, and lacking in meaningful depth (Marcia, 2010). For example, a pseudo-intimate relationship that began in adolescence or young adulthood before identities were formed, may embody stereotypical societal roles of a married couple; however, the relationship may have a shallow quality. Marcia (2010) utilized lyrics from a Simon and Garfunkel song to describe the position of isolate, "I am a rock, I am an island… I touch no one and no one touches me." Although Marcia was not assessing Simon's and Garfunkel's psychosocial development, he thought their lyrics captured the position of isolate well. Conversely, the current study mined music lyrics for intimacy themes.

Generativity

The pursuit of generativity follows the resolution of identity and intimacy crises. According to Erikson (1980), generativity is the interest in and pursuit of bringing up and guiding the next generation. Generativity is often realized in parental (see Pratt, Danso, Arnold,

Norris, & Filyer, 2001) and work responsibilities as legacies are created and transmitted; however, other generative avenues are possible. For example, individuals may fulfill generative roles in mentoring (see Kim, Chee, & Gerhart, 2017), participating in ideological or religious institutions (see Dillon, Wink, & Fay, 2003), or serving the community in some capacity. There is an important shift that occurs in the generative stage as the lifelong preoccupation with self radiates outward towards others and the betterment of man. Failure to achieve generativity can lead to stagnation. One of the best approaches to understanding generativity within the context of social engagement is Dan McAdams's model (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). This multifaceted model highlights how generativity results from the complex interactions between inner personal and societal forces, which fosters a preoccupation and subsequent commitment to guiding the next generation, which leads to generative actions (Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). Although Erikson's model had an additional stage pertaining to late adulthood and death, only the three aforementioned stages were observed in the study.

Psychosocial Development

It is worth mentioning that stage transitioning is not a discrete process; that is, some overlap is anticipated. For example, a child may be in the midst of resolving the autonomy crisis, while they may be in the later form of basic trust and an earlier form of initiative (Erikson, 1980). The resolutions of Erikson's stages from adolescence and beyond are not merely "either-or" matters (Marcia, 2010). Thus, authentic generativity does not exist without elements of self-absorption and stagnation, and genuine integrity without an enduring sense of despair (Marcia, 2010). Furthermore, identity has been found to be constructed and reconstructed throughout the lifespan (McAdams, 1988), and is expected to undergo cyclical re-formulation at least three times after adolescence, and possibly more often if the individual is challenged by external life

events (Marcia, 2010). Stephen, Fraser, and Marcia (1992) found and identified these moratorium-achievement-moratorium-achievement (MAMA) cycles in their research. The length of the MAMA cycles varies according to the surrounding social context and the individual's adaptation ability and can be as short as 6 months or as long as 10 years (Marcia, 2010). While the newly achieved identity following a state of moratorium is novel to some degree, it is also continuous with and shares characteristics similar to the identity that came before it. Flum (1994) found that identity formation is a fluid evolutive process that is less stormy and confusing than previously thought. Although identity can be constructed and reconstructed and can occur fluidly, stage sequencing is still salient. In a study published in 1997, Vandewater, Ostrove, and Stewart utilized an adapted version of the Stewart and colleagues' (1984) coding system to measure how women's well-being in midlife may be predicted by personality development and role quality. Results from the aforementioned study support Erikson's understanding that stage sequencing is a significant predictor for well-being in later life. For the purpose of this study, Erikson's stages were thought of categorically to explain the macro structures of personality development; however, there is much more developmental circularity at the micro level. That is, though identity development is indeed a fluid process, there are notable patterns that can be categorized into discrete stages that conform to Erikson's theory.

Modern Ego Identity Research

Developmental psychologists have advanced the ego identity construct since Erikson pioneered the archetype in the early 1950s. John Bowlby's attachment theory (1969) was an extension of trust versus mistrust, while Jean Phinney's (1992) ethnic identity development theory found identity formation may be more complex for minorities. Aspects of Erikson's construction of the self have been expanded and refined by researchers for decades. More

relevant to the current study may be James Marcia's (1966) identity statuses and Dan McAdams' (2009) life-story model and both will be discussed below.

Marcia's Identity Statuses. James Marcia's (1966) identity statuses empirically supported the identity process outlined by Erikson. Most of the current scholarship on adolescent identity formation have been informed by Marcia's four identity statuses—identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion. Marcia believed identity formation has two significant aspects: a crisis and a commitment. For Marcia, a crisis occurs in an individual when previous values and behaviors are in a state of reexamination, and it is possible for the crisis to occur acutely or it could arise gradually. The aftermath of the reexamination period usually involves a commitment to a new role, belief, goal, etc. Four identity statuses are possible when the two elements are considered. Identity achievement occurs when an individual has experienced a crisis and has reached a new commitment. Moratorium happens when an adolescent is in the midst of the crisis and no commitment has been made. Conversely, a foreclosure status is possible when a commitment has been made without an initiating crisis. Lastly, an individual may be in a state of identity diffusion if there is neither a crisis nor a commitment. It is important to note that not all individuals will experience every status, nor do the statuses occur sequentially. Although identity achievement may occur during adolescence or young adulthood, current research supports the idea that the quest for personal identity continues throughout the lifespan with alternating episodes of instability and stability (Marcia, 2010). In a recent meta-analysis of 124 studies conducted between 1966 and 2005, Kroger, Martinussen, and Marcia (2010) found that individuals who do go through identity status transitions in adolescence and young adulthood are twice as likely to have progressive change than regressive change.

Marcia reduced Erikson's identity construct in order to measure the formation process

with the Identity Status Interview. Marcia designed the interview to get a sense of occupation, political, religious or sexual values that Erikson described are key to the identity formation process; however, according to Marcia, the identity domain was not as critical in assessing the global identity status (Kroger, 2017). Since the inception of the Identity Status Interview, several measures have been developed to assess Marcia's identity statuses (achievement, diffusion, foreclosure, and moratorium). The Extended Objective Measure of Ego Identity Status (EOM-EIS II) established by Adams and colleagues (Adams, Bennion, & Huh, 1989; Adams & Ethier, 1999) has been one of the most widely utilized in the field. The questionnaire allows for identity status assessments in four interpersonal (i.e. dating, friendships, gender roles, and recreation/leisure) and four ideological realms (i.e. occupation, politics, philosophy of life, and religion), as well as providing a global identity status rating (Kroger, 2017). Furthermore, researchers have elaborated on and differentiated identity processes of exploration and commitment. Since Marcia's original work, identity statuses have been examined in relation to the Five-Factor Model of Personality (see Clancy & Dollinger, 1993), self-esteem (see Ryeng, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2013), moral reasoning development (see Jespersen, Kroger, & Martinussen, 2013), intimacy (see Årseth, Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia 2009), and delinquent behavior (see Schwartz, Pantin, Prado, Sullivan, & Szapocznik, 2005) among several other developmental phenomena. The identity formation process has been studied and refined extensively since it was introduced in the mid-1960s, and the literature suggest there will be a continued emphasis in developmental scholarship. While Marcia's primary assessment of identity status was interviewing, subsequent identity formation studies have primarily utilized measures (e.g. EOM-EIS II). Although data gathered via interview can be meaningful, interviews are time consuming, expensive, and difficult to quantify. Identity status measures like the EOM-

19

EIS II can be helpful when larger sample sizes are desired; however, quantitative assessments can often reduce and dilute theories like Erikson's that are robust and comprehensive. The method in the current study allowed Erikson's theory to be assessed qualitatively, retaining its fullness while also providing frequency distributions that quantified psychosocial development over time. Moreover, themes of identity, intimacy and generativity have yet to be analyzed in musical lyrics.

McAdams' Life-Story Model. Although identity formation concepts primarily operationalized by Marcia (1966) have generated massive amounts of empirical research over the past several decades, researchers like Dan McAdams have evolved the theory from Erikson's original writings (Kroger, 2017). McAdams was curious how ego identity manifests in personal narrative through a self-reflexive process, and he developed a three-level model of personality that includes dispositional traits (the person as actor), character adaptations (the person as agent), and life stories (the person as author; McAdams & Olsen, 2010). McAdams utilized the Five-Factor Model (FFM) to discuss how personality traits inform one's life narrative. The FFM is based in linguistic expression of personality and includes the following: (a) openness to experience, (b) contentiousness, (c) extraversion, (d) agreeableness, and (e) neuroticism. Moreover, the aforementioned traits serve as an innate foundation to human personality. Trait variations are measured on a continuum. For example, openness to experience is conceptualized by assessing the extent to which an individual is curious or cautious, while the contentiousness continuum would include organization on one end and carelessness on the other. Thus, the score on each of the five traits sum together to form the bedrock of individual personality which support the other two levels, character adaptations and life stories (McAdams & Olsen, 2010).

The FFM is supported by Eriksonian theory, and it allowed McAdams to integrate some

20

modern personality research in his three level model. Even though traits are the foundation by which personality is formed, personality psychologists have not been satisfied only assessing traits (McAdams & Olsen, 2010). Several of the most important personality theorists in the field (e.g. Freud, Adler, Horney, Fromm, Erikson, Rogers, Maslow, Kelly, Rotter, and Bandura) all positioned social-cognitive or motivational aspects at the center of their theories, emphasizing the interaction of the self and the social environment through age related shifts (McAdams & Olsen). Similar to his predecessors, McAdams found a way to incorporate one's motivations, goals, and intentionality into his three level model by implementing the agentic self. Therefore, McAdams was curious how personal agency influences life narratives and the stories we tell ourselves and others. McAdams believes we develop goals and means by which to meet goals early in our life course. Further, he operationalized Erikson's notion of the age appropriate stages and associated crises by taking into account how one moves through the aforementioned with personal agency. Thus, our dispositional traits interact with our personal goals and ability to achieve goals that are brought on by the age related psychosocial crises.

In a four-year longitudinal study of 298 college students, Roberts, O'Donnell, and Robins (2004) found correlations between dispositional traits and goals. For example, agreeableness was negatively related to aesthetic goals and positively related to relationship goals. Moreover, Roberts and colleagues found that extraverts expressed higher levels of enthusiasm in comparison to introverts for a larger number and assortment of personal goals. The ways in which individuals manage goals over the lifespan change as young adults have higher levels of conflict tolerance among various life goals, whereas midlife and older adults manage goals in a way to minimize conflict (McAdams & Olsen, 2010). Layered over the actor's dispositional traits is a personal agenda that will come to involve the personality's most significant

characteristic adaptations (McAdams & Olsen). "Narrative identity is the storied understanding that a person develops regarding how he or she came to be and where he or she is going in life" (McAdams & Olsen, 2010, p. 527). Characteristic adaptations or life narratives flow out of an acceptance and understanding of personal traits, the extent to which agency can be harnessed in meeting life goals, and the age appropriate developmental tasks one faces. According to McAdams and Olsen, individuals categorize and organize their life narratives into chapters, with high points, low points, turning points, various characters and intersecting plot lines. It is the third layer of McAdams' model, characteristic adaptations, that theoretically aligns with the current study. Music lyrics embody McAdams' concept of self-authorship and the evolving narrative identity. Lyrics are not only symbolic representations of self-expression, but literal forms of personal story telling. Data in songs and albums, if studied chronologically, should provide sufficient information to measure the expected psychosocial indicators in narrative form. Although evidence of the first two levels (the person as an actor and an agent) of McAdams' model appear early in human development, evidence of the third level (the person as author) does not come to fruition until adolescence or young adulthood (McAdams & Olsen), the level and period in which the current study addressed.

McAdams developed a Life Story Interview questionnaire to assess narrative identity in the 1980s, and it has been through several revisions with the most recent occurring in 2008. Unfortunately, it would be difficult and in fact, impossible to use the aforementioned questionnaire on music lyrics; however, the theoretical association between McAdams' concept of characteristic adaptations and the principles outlined in the current study is difficult to ignore. McAdams has published several books on the psychology of personality (2001, 2005, 2010, 2013, 2016), one of which was a case study, a psychological profile of George W. Bush (2010).

As previously mentioned, Erikson published case studies on Mahatmas Ghandi and Martin Luther utilizing his psychosocial theory to explain their historical narratives, and Stewart and colleagues (1988) and Peterson and Stewart (1990) used Vera Brittain as a case for study in their articles. In keeping with the case study tradition in Eriksonian research, John Mayer's psychosocial development was analyzed in the current study.

Coding Verbal Text for Self Preoccupation

Similar to McAdams' research, Stewart and colleagues (1988 & 1990) advanced Erikson's theory from his original writings. Stewart, Franz, and Layton (1988) developed a system based on Erikson's work that is designed to code any verbal text for preoccupation with self-definitional issues. Following a comprehensive review of Erikson's writings, the final version of the coding manual included three major categories (e.g. identity, intimacy, and generativity) and sub themes for each of the aforementioned categories. For example, identity contained nine specific themes, while intimacy contained four and generativity contained three. Each theme is linked to a theoretical statement Erikson made, and thus, is considered an elaboration of the level of detail within the major category. In Stewart and colleagues 1988 study, the coding system was applied to Vera Brittain's diary entries and letters of correspondence from 1914 to 1916. Brittain was in her early 20s at the time the material was written. Stewart and colleagues obtained psychosocial scores expressed in images per 1,000 words, for each of the discrete categories as articulated in each of the 12 single months sampled during the three year period. When the sub themes are collapsed into the major categories and the total scores are taken into account, the researchers found Brittain expressed more than 16 identity images, approximately four intimacy images, and one generativity image per 1,000 words. Further, Stewart and colleagues believe that Brittain's overwhelming concern with

identity is consistent with Erikson's theory regarding adolescent preoccupation with self. Peterson and Stewart (1990) conducted a similar study in which they compared three various periods of Brittain's diary entries to five fictional novels she had written during overlapping times. The overall results of the study aligned with Erikson's concept about how generativity concerns should increase and preoccupation with identity and intimacy stages should decline in mid-life. The researchers also found Brittain had a higher than expected preoccupation with identity in midlife that was associated with generativity, which would support McAdams' (1988) finding that identity is constructed and reconstructed throughout lifespan. The coding and analysis methods utilized in the two studies support Erikson's theory and seem appropriate for measuring texts for psychosocial change over time. Therefore, the coding system is applicable to lyrics, and the findings were analogous to Stewart and colleagues'. That is, preoccupation with generativity increased, while identity and intimacy decreased in the artist over time.

Personality and Music

Over the past several decades, researchers (e.g., DeNora, 1999; North & Hargreaves, 1999) have examined how music is a vehicle for self-expression in adolescents and adults. DeNora found music is a medium individuals use to elaborate on and fill in and fill out their identities (p. 54), while North and Hargreaves observed how musical preference can be a form of self-expression and judgment of others in adolescence. Rentfrow and Gosling (2007) established that individuals have profound and well-demarcated stereotypes about fans of various music genres, and that these stereotypes accurately identify psychological traits of individuals, while Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2007) sought to understand how variance in personality and cognitive ability influence how we experience music. These studies support the idea there is an important relationship between music and the human experience. Moreover, these studies

highlight how music can be an expression of self and how it can be employed to understand and categorize others. Thus, these studies observed how passively receiving music can aid in the understanding of individual personality and the personality of others. There is scant research, if any, that explore the relationship between music production and individual personality. If a substantial connection between music consumers and expressions of personality has been established (see DeNora; North & Hargreaves), can an analogous finding be observed in the relationship between a producer of music and personality? In order to assess whether a musical artist's personality would be expressed in his lyrics, some criteria would be necessary. As previously mentioned, it would be imperative the artist solely write most of their lyrics and music. Although a small amount of co-written songs could be excluded from the analysis, a large sample size of singularly written material would be necessary in order to adequately assess psychosocial change over time. Furthermore, a majority of the songs on each album spanning several years would be required. Secondly, an artist would have to be an active writer during the age specific psychosocial stages that are to be analyzed. Thus, the writer would need to begin their career in late adolescence and have continuous album releases throughout young and middle adulthood in order to sufficiently gauge personality development across psychosocial stages. Lastly, the artist would need to be serious about their craft in so much that their lyrics clearly articulate preoccupation with self-definitional issues. It would be challenging and maybe impossible to analyze lyrics that are merely written to rhyme and/or are trivial. Therefore, it is imperative the artist's intent as a songwriter is to be serious and clear.

The Current Study

Taking into account the aforementioned restrictions of the methods used to operationalize

and measure ego identity, the current study examined the relationship between music lyrics and psychosocial development by utilizing the Stewart and colleagues (1984) coding system, repeated measures ANOVA analyses, and frequency distributions for qualitative data. Further, the methods supported the goal of understanding how psychosocial developmental themes evolve by analyzing music lyrics from an artist's discography by using album release dates as non-linear points in time. The coded material provided adequate data to analyze the expected sequential psychosocial change that occurs over time. That is, albums released earlier in the artist's career (i.e. when he was an adolescent and/or young adult) should have higher frequency distributions of identity than albums released later and when the artist was older. Similarly, albums released in the middle to the end of the artist's discography should have higher frequency distributions of intimacy than albums released earlier and when the artist was younger. Therefore, there should be greater preoccupation with identity in earlier albums, and a decline in identity coupled with an increased interest in intimacy in middle and later albums. Although the artist does meet the anticipated age criteria for generative preoccupation, some traces of generativity with increasing chronological frequency throughout the discography should appear. Therefore, analogous to the Stewart and colleagues (1988) and Peterson and Stewart (1990) studies, material written about the self and others at the age specific to the corresponding psychosocial stage should include Eriksonian themes that can be coded and analyzed. In conclusion, John Mayer's psychosocial development should be evident in the lyrics of his albums and Stewart, Franz, and Layton's (1984) method of coding should be appropriate for examining Erikson's theory in music lyrics.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

Introduction

In order to best assess personality development in music lyrics, the appropriate methods were carefully selected and will be addressed in this chapter. First, I will discuss how the music artist was chosen for the current study. Second, sample size arrangement and instrumentation will be reviewed. Third, the coding procedure and interrater agreement will be mentioned, while the final segment will cover the quantitative analyses that were conducted.

Choosing an Artist: John Mayer

Selecting a musical artist for the study was relatively random, although John Mayer's music meets criteria making it an ideal case for study. In an interview with Mark Small of *Berklee Today* (2005), Mayer said the following when asked about his songwriting process:

> I pretty much explain myself in my songs; I'm not very abstract. I like to be understood. As a songwriter, you make a decision early on about whether you want to be understood. The people who don't want to be understood don't really love what I do. They think it's too fluorescent, transparent, or even boring. I'm not giving them anything to wonder about, just things to see. At the end of four and a half minutes, I want people to get it. I don't want to give them more to wonder about.

With the exception of one to three songs on some of his albums (11 songs total), he has solely written his music catalog. Many other popular artists who have recorded several albums over time work with teams of writers (e.g. Rolling Stones, Queen, The Beatles), thus obscuring, if not

making an exploration of personal identity, impossible. Further, the writing and publication of his albums occurred during the appropriate age-related psychosocial stages that are being considered in the current study with the exception of generativity. Although generative themes appeared in the artist's lyrics and increase in frequency over time, the artist's age falls short of Erikson's hypothesis insomuch as the generativity crisis does not fully crystalize until the approximate age of 40. John Mayer was 39 at the time his most recent album, *The Search for Everything* was released in 2017, and it is assumed that the writing process for the album began shortly after the release of his previous album, *Paradise Valley* in 2013. Mayer was 35-years-old in 2013 when *Paradise Valley* was released. Stewart and colleagues (1988) coded generativity in their study even though the participant in this case study was in her early 20s at the time the documents were written, and they found traces of generative preoccupation. Thus, although generative themes were found in the study, additional research beyond the case should explore in greater depth how generativity manifests in music lyrics.

Sample

John Mayer's lyrics from his entire studio discography totaling 70 songs (after co-written songs were removed) and n = 15,682 words (M = 2,240 words per album) over a 17-year period were studied.

Table 1. *John Mayer's Album Word Counts*

Album Name	Year	Total Words	Total Words After Co-Written

		Songs		Songs Removed
Room for Squares	2001	10	2,878	2,243
Heavier Things	2003	9	2,608	2,397
Continuum	2006	9	2,578	1,917
Battle Studies	2009	10	2,385	2,486
Born and Raised	2012	13	2,606	2,548
Paradise Valley	2013	8	2,191	1,685
The Search for Everything	2017	11	2,421	2,406

Note: Total words after co-written songs removed = 15,682; M = 2,240 words per album after co-written songs removed.

A singular case study was suggested by the dissertation committee for its straightforwardness and associated methodological power. Peterson and Stewart (1990) believed the absence of being able to statistically generalize results to specified populations must be countered by the analytical generalizability the study does allow. Further, when fairly clear predictions can be measured in a case study, some conclusions about the theory can be made universally. Because Stewart, Franz, and Layton's (1984) coding mechanism has not yet been applied to music lyrics, this case study approach provides insight for future identity development research.

Instrumentation

Lyrics from John Mayer's seven albums, released over a 17-year period (2001 – 2017; n = 15,682 words, M = 2,240 words per album), were coded. The coding manual developed by

Stewart and colleagues (1984) was utilized exclusively (Table 2). Prior to their coding system, no such coding mechanism had been developed to study Eriksonian theory in personal documents. According to Stewart and colleagues (1988), the coding descriptions were created for use in identifying any written text for concern with self-definitional issues. Following an exhaustive review of Erikson's writings, Stewart and colleagues (1984) found the following themes for the corresponding psychosocial stages:

Table 2. *Coding Categories for Identity, Intimacy, and Generativity*

Identity: Sameness and continuity, identifications, occupational role, values, confirmation by intimates, confirmation by society, idealizations, traits and awareness of characteristics, preferences and tastes, and general identity concerns

Intimacy: Secure identity, shared identity, mutuality of devotion, genital sexuality, and general intimacy concerns

Generativity: Caring, productivity, need to be needed, and general generativity concerns

Often found in lyrical content are self descriptive states of the psychological self evidenced in the following example written by John Mayer (2006):

> Me and all my friends, We're all misunderstood, They say we stand for nothing,
>
> And there's no way we ever could, Now we see everything that's going wrong with the

world, And those who lead it, We just feel like we don't have the means to rise above and

beat it, So we keep waiting, Waiting on the world to change. (track 1)

Thus, music lyrics fit the coding criteria. The aforementioned themes were found in lyrical

content. Moreover, music lyrics fit the criteria for personal documents while also being a

generative product, both of which the coding system was designed to assess.

Coding

To determine the best course forward for the coding procedure, a pilot study was

implemented. Three different processes within the coding procedure needed to be addressed

since the coding system had not been previously utilized in studying music lyrics. The first

process pertained to the lyrical phrasing and whether there was an advantage to leaving the lyrics

unaltered or altering the lyrics to correspond with the musical phrasing. Secondly, it was

important to determine whether there was any benefit to coding the lyrics in sequential order of

psychosocial stage or at random. Lastly, it was imperative to conclude whether the songs should

be coded in order or at random. To address the aforementioned concerns, three Taylor Swift

songs were selected off three distinct albums released in 2006, 2008, and 2010 respectively. As a

result of the pilot study (found in Appendix A), the following coding procedural decisions were

made for the principal study:

I. Each song was listened to and the lyrics altered to match the musical phrasing as that
   allowed for a more appropriate codable image.

II. Coding followed its natural course as coding one stage at a time, whether in order, or
   at random, proved to be unnecessary and unwieldy.

III. The order in which songs are coded were randomized.

Each of the 70 songs were listened to in order to determine rhythmic phrasing in lyrical

31

content. For example, when lyrics are written, the phrasing may not be consistent with the rhythmic patterns of the songs when performed. That is, the performed or audible phrasing is the intention of the lyricist. Lyrical phrases were coded positively (+1) for certainty and negatively (-1) for uncertainty of psychological themes. Stewart and colleagues did not score repetitions of identical imagery if they occurred within the same sentence. For the purpose of this study, repetitions of identical imagery were not scored if they occur within the same phrase; however, repetitions were scored if they appeared in adjoining discrete phrases (e.g. choruses). The order in which songs were coded was determined by an online random generator. Although the order in which the songs were coded was randomized, psychosocial data was coded fluidly as no advantage was found coding each stage separately in order or at random in the pilot study (Appendix A). NVivo Pro for Windows 11.4.1.1064 was employed to organize data and assist in the coding process.

Agreement

Although the entire music catalog was coded by the primary researcher, a second researcher was employed to code at least twenty percent of the data in order to check and maintain coding congruency. Moreover, along with evidence of the previously mentioned expected psychosocial developmental shifts (e.g. decrease in identity themes coupled with an increase in intimacy themes over time), interrater agreement was used determine the appropriateness of Stewart et al. (1984) method of coding for examining Erikson's theory in music lyrics. Observed agreement ratings and Cohen's unweighted kappa coefficient ratings were tabulated and are reported in the next chapter. Both agreement methods were calculated at the psychosocial level while the kappa coefficient factored in chance. This provided a 4x4 matrix that included the three psychosocial stages as well an uncodable images category. Cohen

considered kappa coefficient ratings of 0.61–0.80 as substantial, while a modern interpretation

suggests a rating between 0.60–0.79 as moderate (McHugh, 2012).

Data Analysis

To determine how personality development unfolds over time in John Mayer's albums, a

repeated measures ANOVA of the three psychosocial stages (identity, intimacy and

generativity[1]) as defined by Stewart and colleagues (1984) over seven points in time (album

release dates: 2001, 2003, 2006, 2009, 2012, 2013, and 2017) was employed. Co-written and

cover (material not written by John Mayer) songs were excluded from the coding and analyses.

Individual albums were analyzed as non-linear points in time based on their respective release

date, because the distance between albums is not equal. Psychosocial change tends to occur

slowly; therefore, the seven albums that span 17 years provided sufficient data to assess the

expected developmental shifts. Raw image scores for each of the subcategories were totaled,

weighted by song word count, and collapsed into the weighted total for each psychosocial stage

(identity, intimacy, and generativity) per album. This approach allowed songs to be nested within

the albums and their respective release dates. A repeated measures ANOVA was also utilized to

assess the frequency distributions of the subcategories over time. Raw image scores for each of

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[1] (a) Identity – Sameness and continuity, identifications, occupational role, values, confirmation

by intimates, confirmation by society, idealizations, traits and awareness of characteristics,

preferences and tastes, and general identity concerns; (b)Intimacy – Secure identity, shared

identity, mutuality of devotion, genital sexuality, and general intimacy concerns; (c) Generativity

– Caring, productivity, need to be needed, and general generativity concerns

the subcategories were totaled with the plus and minus system collapsed, weighted by song word count, and organized by album. Since the amount of data in this analysis was cumbersome, significant subcategory frequency distributions were identified for each album and discussed in the context of change over time while factoring in external events that occurred in the artist's life. Lastly, a repeated measures ANOVA that included Billboard 200 song charting was used to bridge the gap in the literature between how music consumerism and music production may be utilized in better understanding psychological expressions of the self and others. For the final analysis, raw image scores for each of the subcategories were totaled, weighted by song word count, collapsed into the weighted total for each psychosocial stage (identity, intimacy, and generativity) per song, and a chart dichotomy was factored in as a covariate. IBM SPSS Statistics Version 25 was utilized for quantitative analysis of the coded material.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

Introduction

The following section will include results from the coding process and the quantitative analyses that were conducted. First, observed interrater agreement ratings will be provided, followed by Cohen's unweighted Kappa coefficient interrater agreement ratings. Procedural decisions that were made during the coding process will also be discussed. Secondly, the results from the analyses will be given. In this section, charts are provided of the mean psychosocial stage scores across albums, as well as the mean subcategory scores organized by psychosocial stage across albums. Lastly, relevant psychosocial themes that manifested on specific albums as well as across albums will be presented.

Coding Agreement

The observed interrater agreement and Cohen's unweighted kappa coefficient interrater agreement results are presented separately. The observed interrater agreement before discussion with the second coder was 82.91% for the 14 songs or twenty percent of John Mayer's entire music catalog after co-written and cover songs were removed, while the observed interrater agreement after discussion was 85.69%. Each song's observed agreement rating before and after discussion is provided in Table 3.

Table 3. *Observed Interrater Agreement Ratings*

Song Title	Observed Interrater Agreement Rating Before Discussion	Observed Interrater Agreement Rating After Discussion
"3x5"	50%	50%
"83"	65.71%	85.71%
"Back to You"	82.86%	82.86%
"Bigger Than My Body"	85.71%	85.71%
"Born & Raised Reprise"	100%	100%
"Dreaming with a Broken Heart"	100%	100%
"Heartbreak Warfare"	86.21%	86.21%
"Love is a Verb"	96.55%	96.55%
"My Stupid Mouth"	78.57%	78.57%
"Slow Dancing in a Burning Room"	71.11%	90%
"Something's Missing"	86.05%	86.05%
"Who Says"	87.5%	87.5%

"Your Body is a Wonderland"	100%	100%
"You're Gonna Live Forever in Me"	70.59%	70.59%

Cohen's unweighted Kappa coefficient interrater agreement rating was 67.87% for the 14 songs or twenty percent of John Mayer's entire music catalog after co-written and cover songs were removed. The discrepancy between the two ratings was jarring at first. However, after further examination, I realized that the two songs that had the largest difference in agreement rating also had the least amount of psychosocial variation. Considering the unweighted kappa coefficient model factors in chance, this would significantly reduce the rating. For example, "83" had 35 codable images, and only one of the images was coded as intimacy, while the remaining 34 were coded as identity. Similarly, "Heartbreak Warfare" had 33 codable images, all of which were coded as intimacy. "3x5" had the lowest observed interrater agreement rating in the sample, and the discrepancy occurred as a result of the differing opinions of what constituted a codable image and what did not. That is, interrater agreement variance in "3x5" was not a result of thematic coding differences, but whether or not the image met the criteria for coding. Moreover, a majority of the disagreement that occurred in the sample was a result of such discrepancies. This challenge in the coding process will be discussed further in chapter five along with suggestions for future research; however, it is worth noting in the current chapter. Each song's unweighted kappa coefficient agreement rating is provided along with the observed interrater agreement after discussion in Table 4.

Table 4. *Cohen's Unweighted Kappa Coefficient Interrater Agreement Ratings*

Song Title	Cohen's Unweighted Kappa Coefficient Rating	Observed Interrater Agreement Rating After Discussion
"3x5"	33%	50%
"83"	24.41%	85.71%
"Back to You"	69.12%	82.86%
"Bigger Than My Body"	63.16%	85.71%
"Born & Raised Reprise"	100%	100%
"Dreaming with a Broken Heart"	100%	100%
"Heartbreak Warfare"	29.27%	86.21%
"Love is a Verb"	96.55%	96.55%
"My Stupid Mouth"	62.91%	78.57%
"Slow Dancing in a Burning Room"	48.92%	90%
"Something's Missing"	79.28%	86.05%
"Who Says"	85.02%	87.5%

"Your Body is a Wonderland"	100%	100%
"You're Gonna Live Forever in Me"	58.54%	70.59%

One issue that occurred at the beginning of the coding procedure when discussing agreement in the principal study was whether we should consider the theme (i.e. a relationship) of a song after reading through the lyrics before coding, or whether we should merely code the lines for how they appeared on the page. That is, we questioned to what extent we should code with the foreknowledge of what the perceived theme of the song may be, or do we code each lyrical line for what it is while factoring in adjacent lines. For example, I coded a song line-by-line without first reading through the lyrics, while the second coder began coding after she read through the lyrics in their entirety. She believed the song was about the loss of a relationship and coded a fair amount of intimacy, while I did not have the context of the relationship until the end of the song and consequently coded many lines as identity. After further coding and discussion, we agreed that it was most efficacious to code the lyrics based on the overall context of the song. Coding line by line without factoring in the theme of the song proved to be inadequate. This issue did not arise during the pilot study as the lyrics in the Taylor Swift songs that we coded were thematically clearer and less challenging to code overall. We found agreement on psychosocial stage level was often high; however, there was variance in the subcategories. For example, it was often difficult to differentiate between shared identity and mutuality of devotion in intimacy. I am uncertain how important the discrepancy is, but I think it is worth noting. During discussion, we often had some of the same doubts about what we coded and how we coded it, and yet, we

39

usually coded the lyrics similarly. For example, in "Born and Raised Reprise," we both wondered if we should have coded generativity in some of the lyrics; however, we both coded the lines in question as identity. It was sometimes challenging to differentiate between identity and generativity without the knowledge of the time in which a song was written. The second coder was less familiar with song chronology than I was, and the discrepancy sometimes appeared when we assessed and discussed our agreement ratings. Furthermore, we could often settle a psychosocial stage incongruity by considering the time in which the song was written in the artist's life. There were other times when our agreement rating was lower, because I had coded a single image two or more times, while she may have coded it once or vice versa. For example, the primary disagreement in "Slow Dancing in a Burning Room" was my coding several adjacent lines as intimacy and identity, while she only coded intimacy. After discussion, she agreed the lines that she had only coded as intimacy should have been coded as identity as well. Overall, agreement was high for songs in which intimacy themes were pervasive throughout. We found that coding intimacy was straight forward, while identity and generativity were more difficult. As previously mentioned, knowledge of the approximate age in which a song was written would often clear up coding inconsistencies. There were seven lines in "83" that she coded as generativity while I coded them as identity. After discussing and informing her when the song was written, she agreed that she should have coded them as identity. Thus, our agreement after discussion for "83" was 85.71%. It is also worth mentioning that I continued to adjust the lyrics to the musical phrasing; however, I began to combine separate lines of lyrics to form one codable image. This smoothed out the coding process. As I listened to the songs before coding them, I noticed that I was reorganizing the lyrics based on what would count as a codable image. Thus, the rhythmic phrasing was not as important as what could and could not be coded

in the text based on the contextual surrounding phrases.

Analysis

In order to prepare the data for the principal analysis, raw subcategory images were weighted by song and album word count (raw subcategory image score x song word count / total album word count). This was done to account for the length variance in songs and albums. After reviewing several options, weighting by word count proved to be the best solution to provide quantitative congruity between songs and albums. Once the subcategories were weighted by word count, they were collapsed into the three main psychosocial stages per song and organized by album. Therefore, I had weighted totals for identity, intimacy, and generativity images that appeared in each song grouped by album.

Table 5. *Mean Psychosocial Stage Scores*

Album Name	Identity	Intimacy	Generativity	Number of Songs
Room for Squares	1.38 (1.76)	1.20 (1.32)	0.00 0.00	10
Heavier Things	1.44 (1.77)	2.20 (1.32)	0.18 (0.46)	9
Continuum	1.76 (1.81)	1.45 (1.95)	0.07 (0.11)	9
Battle Studies	0.60 (0.77)	2.47 (1.73)	0.08 (0.27)	10
Born and Raised	0.62 (0.72)	0.75 (1.18)	0.31 (0.56)	13

Paradise Valley	1.38 (1.48)	1.11 (0.81)	0.30 (0.58)	8
The Search for Everything	0.38 (.69)	1.59 (1.09)	0.26 (0.56)	11
Total	1.03 (1.36)	1.51 (1.67)	0.18 (.43)	70

A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted for the primary analysis with psychosocial stages treated as within-subjects factors while albums were treated as between-subjects factors. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[b] was significant ($\chi^2(2) = 38.08$, $p < .001$, $\mu_p^2 = .215$), while the Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted main effect of psychosocial stage was significant, $F(1.4, 86.4) = 17.279$, $p < .001$, $\mu_p^2 = .215$. Mean psychosocial stage scores across albums were identity = 1.03, intimacy = 1.51, and generativity = 0.18 (see Table 5), while mean psychosocial stage scores by album are listed in Table 6. The main effect for album was significant $F(6, 63) = 2.295$, $p = .046$. As for pairwise comparisons, there were no significant differences between the first album and the other albums; however, albums two ($M = -.71$, $SD = .22$, $p = .002$), three ($M = -.53$, $SD = .22$, $p = .019$), and four ($M = -.49$, $SD = .21$, $p = .026$) significantly differed from album five. There were no significant differences between album six and the other albums, while album seven ($M = .53$, $SD = .23$, $p = .025$) significantly differed from album two. The interaction was not significant. Although the interaction between album and psychosocial development was not statistically significant, the frequency distribution patterns that did manifest are consistent with Erikson's theory. That is, Mayer's overall identity concerns appear to decline, while his global preoccupation with intimacy seemed to rise and then ebb and flow over time and eventually

trend downwards. Generative concerns were non-existent on the first album; however, generative themes appeared on the second album and seem to slowly rise over time. Mayer's psychosocial development is consistent with my hypothesis (based on Erikson's original theory) in so much that identity concerns should decline, intimacy concerns should increase and stabilize, while traces of generativity should appear and slowly increase over time as he nears midlife.

Table 6. *Mean Psychosocial Stage Scores Per Album*
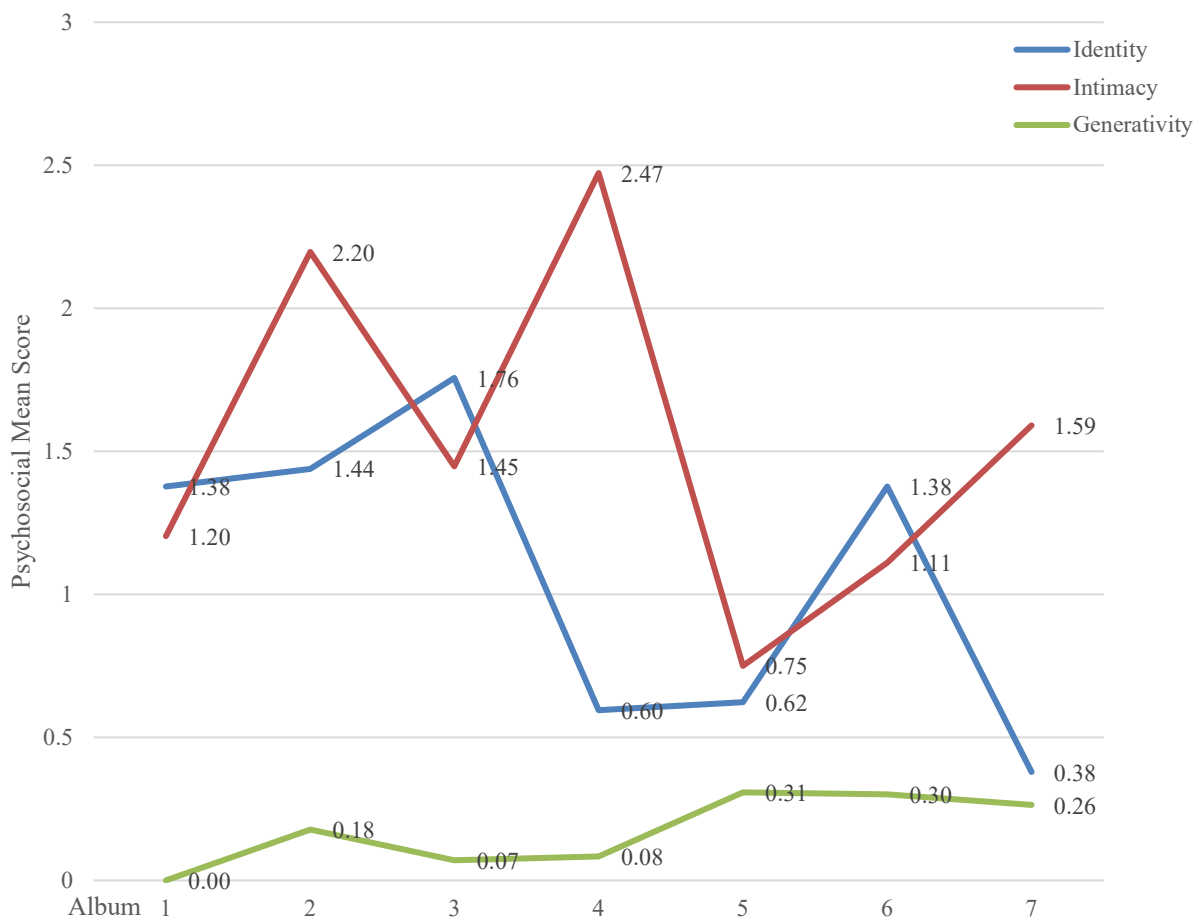
In order to prepare the data for the second analysis and analogous to preparation for the first, raw subcategory images were weighted by song and album word count (raw subcategory image score x song word count / total album word count). Once the 38 subcategories were weighted by word count, the plus and minus totals were collapsed into 19 subcategories per song and organized by album. Therefore, I had weighted totals for the 19 subcategory images that appeared in each song grouped by album. A repeated measures ANOVA was conducted for the secondary analysis with subcategories treated as within-subjects factors while albums were treated as between-subjects factors. Mauchly's Test of Sphericity[b] was significant ($\chi^2(170) =$ 1298.71, $p < .001$, $\mu_p^2 = .145$), while the Greenhouse-Geisser adjusted main effect for subcategories was significant, $F(6.7, 423.8) = 10.65$, $p < .001$, $\mu_p^2 = .145$. The main effect for album and interaction was not significant; however, some psychosocial subcategories were more prevalent on some albums than others. Because the data output in the second analysis was enormous and cumbersome to broadly interpret, the three highest subcategory means for each psychosocial stage were identified and are provided. For identity, sameness and continuity (M = .54) and values ($M = .96$) appeared to be highest in album three, while identifications ($M = .52$) seemed most prevalent in album six. As for intimacy, general concerns ($M = 1.21$) appeared highest in album two, mutuality of devotion ($M = .92$) seemed most pervasive in album four, and shared identity ($M = .55$) appeared to peak in album two. Lastly for generativity, productivity ($M = .23$) seemed highest in album six, while general concerns ($M = .18$) appeared to peak in album five and caring ($M = .02$) seemed most prevalent in album three. The mean subcategory scores across albums are provided in Tables 7 – 10 (identity subcategory means are divided into two graphs for easier interpretation). Further psychosocial themes at the stage and subcategory level that manifested and are tied to the artist's overall developmental trends across time will be

discussed in the next section.

Table 7. *Mean Identity Subcategory (1 – 5) Scores Per Album*
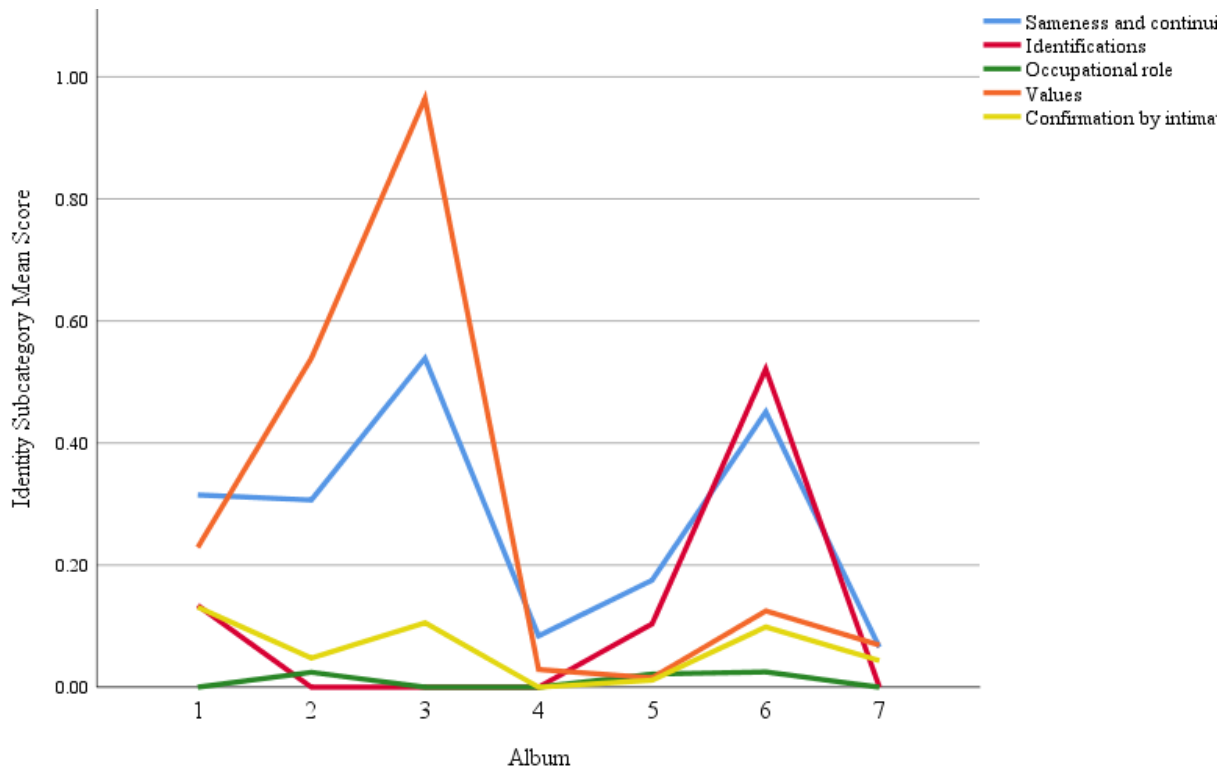
Table 8. *Mean Identity Subcategory (6 – 10) Scores Per Album*
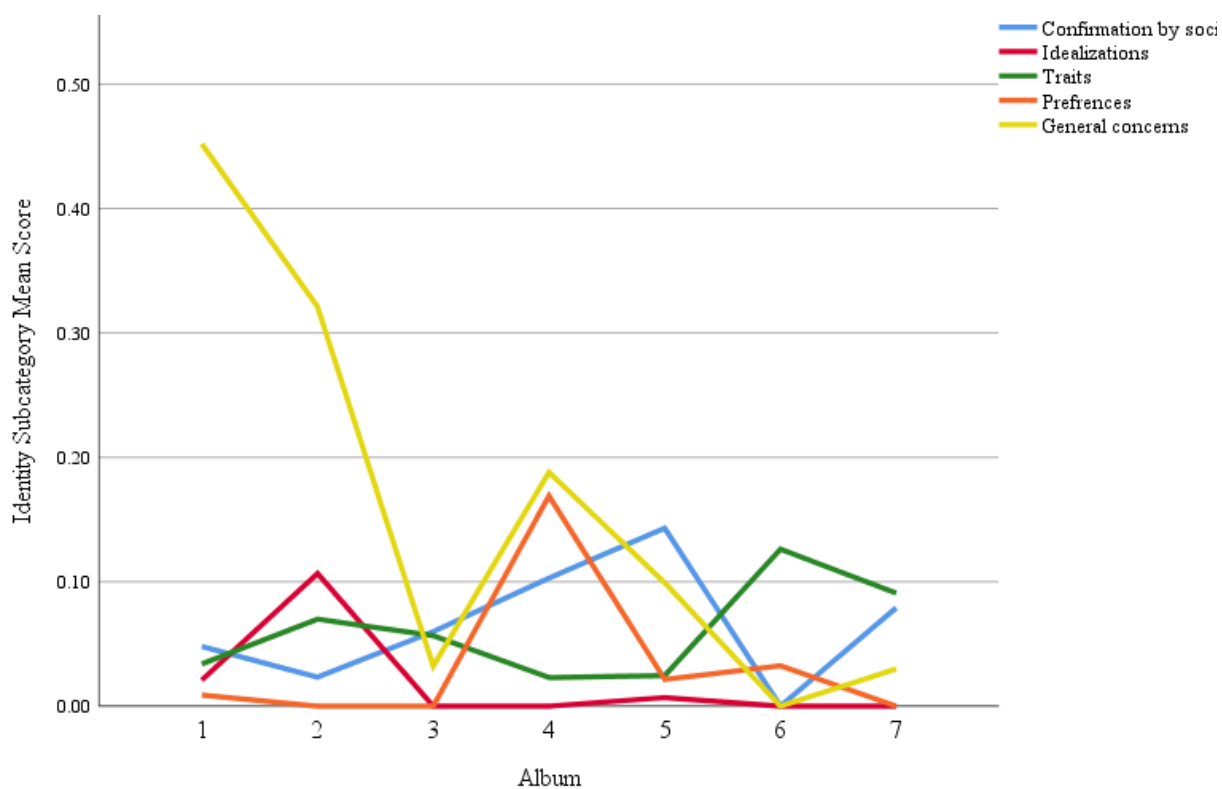
Table 9. *Mean Intimacy Subcategory Scores Per Album*
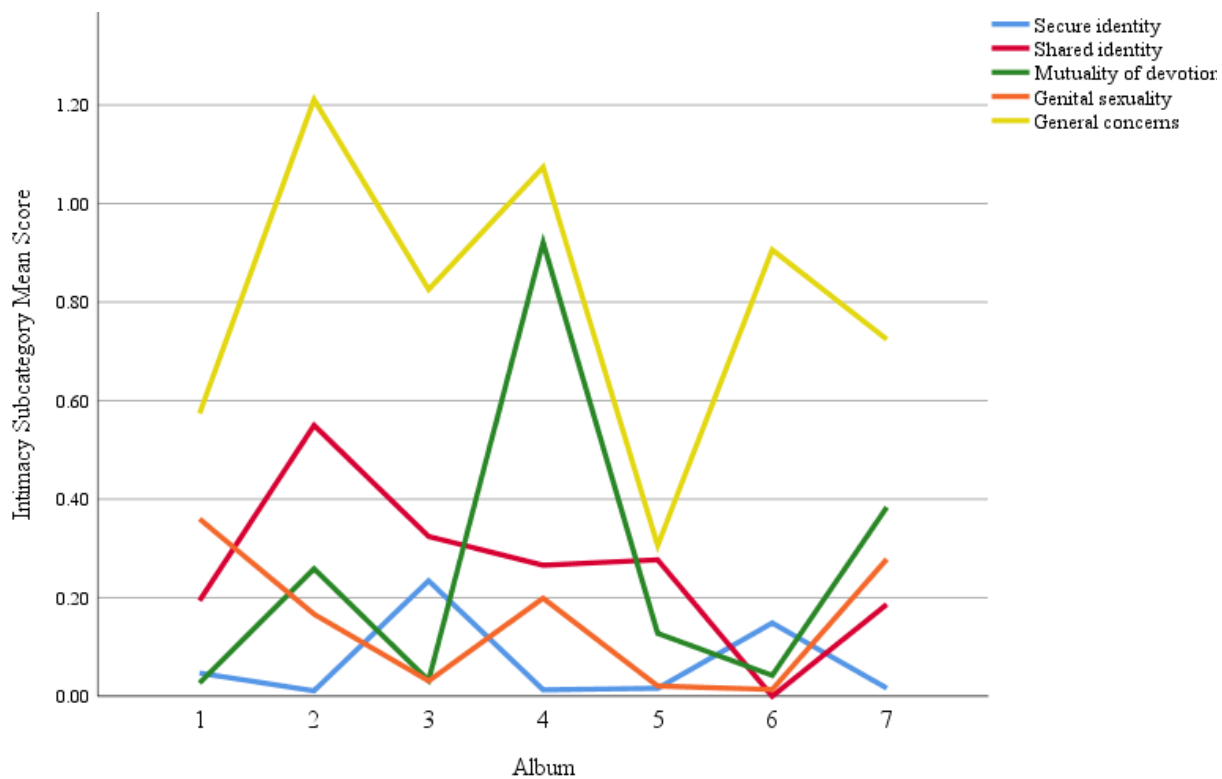
Table 10. *Mean Generativity Subcategory Scores Per Album*
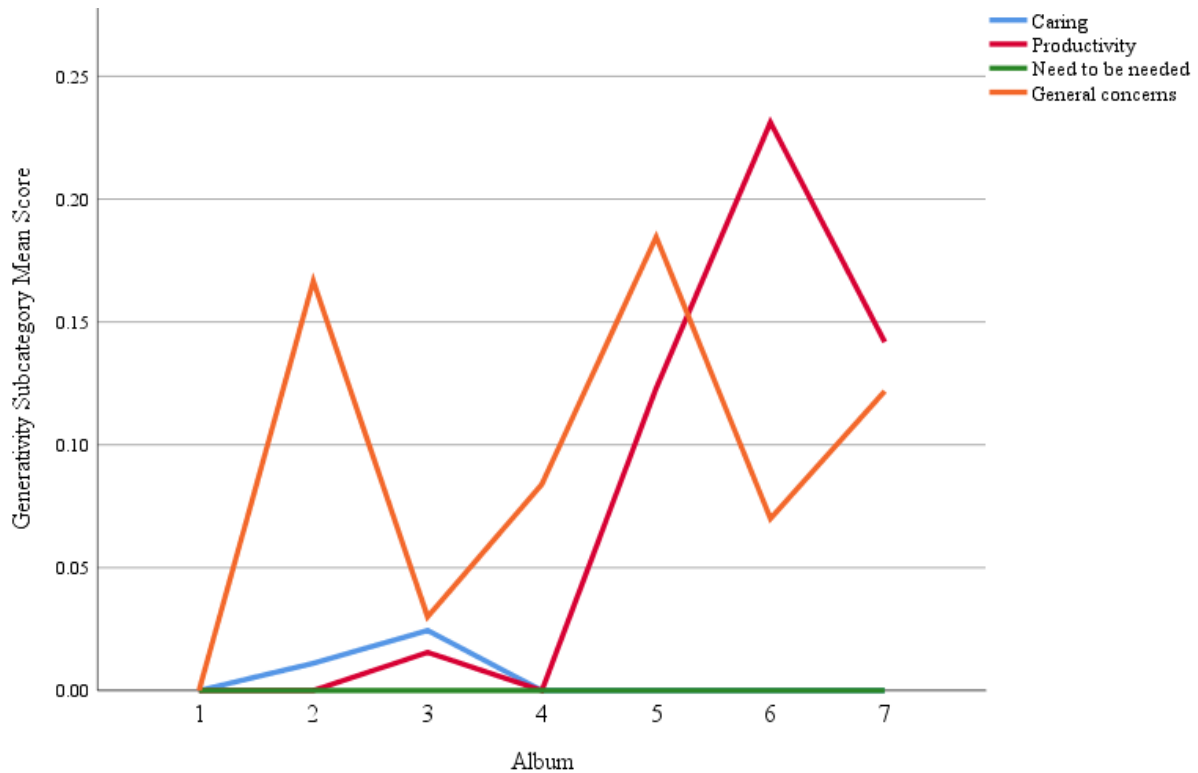
As for the third and final analysis that included Billboard 200 chart positions, no significant findings were discovered. No significant differences were found between songs that charted versus songs that did not; however, for most of the songs that appeared on the chart, one psychosocial stage was often overrepresented. For example, "Your Body is a Wonderland" only had themes of intimacy and reached a chart position of 18 in the Billboard 200. Of the 34 possible codable images in the song, all were coded as intimacy by myself and the secondary

coder. Agreement was 100%. Additional quantitative analyses were run in order to determine if the thematic singularity was specific to charted songs or not; however, no significant differences were found. That said, the pattern was observed in charted songs and worth mentioning. Results from this analysis will be discussed further in the future research section.

Mayer's Psychosocial Theme Manifestations Over Time

As previously mentioned, the interaction between album and psychosocial development (stage or subcategory) was not significant; however, predictable and sequential psychosocial patterns appeared to occur in John Mayer's development over time. Identity concerns seemed to decline, while intimacy preoccupation appeared to be predominant and yet, rose and fell across albums. Some generativity seemed to appear early; however, higher frequencies appeared to occur in later albums and seemed to remain stable. Mayer's identity concerns appear to peak on album three, while intimacy preoccupation seemed to be at an apex on album four. Generativity preoccupation appeared to be the highest on the fifth album and seemed to have analogous frequencies on subsequent albums. Identity themes appeared to be the most prevalent on albums one, three, and six, followed by intimacy and generativity preoccupation. Conversely, intimacy seemed highest on albums two, four, five, and seven, followed by identity and generativity concerns. Generativity never appeared to be as prominent as identity or intimacy on any album; however, psychosocial frequency distributions were clustered closer together on the fifth and sixth albums.

The artist's overall identity concerns appeared to be connected to his sameness and continuity preoccupation. That is, when overall identity scores ebbed and flowed, sameness and continuity followed a similar course in frequency distribution. Mayer's values concerns seemed to be the most prevalent in albums two ($M = .54$) and three ($M = .96$), while confirmation by

society appeared to occur the most on albums four (M = .10) and five (M = .14).

Although intimacy sequencing patterns have not been addressed in previous research, patterns were discovered in the current study. Genital sexuality seemed to peak on the first album (M = .45) and appeared to decrease on successive albums with some ebbs and flows, while shared identity seemed the most prevalent on the second album (M = .55) and also appeared to decrease over time. Mutuality of devotion preoccupation appeared to be the highest on the fourth album (M = .92) and seemed to trend downward across successive albums; however, it appeared to increase on the seventh album (M = .38). Secure identity rarely seemed to appear but seemed highest on albums three (M = .23) and six (M = .15). Mayer's psychosocial patterns will be further discussed along with the external events that occurred in his life in the next section.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

To best address the findings of the current study, it is important to discuss what was found to be statistically significant and what was not. Psychosocial development that occurred within each album *was* found to be significant; however, the psychosocial development interaction between albums *was not* found to be significant. Therefore, when Mayer's psychosocial development is discussed in this chapter at the level of album (i.e. stage and subcategory frequency distributions per album), there is significant statistical evidence to support the claims. When Mayer's psychosocial development is discussed across albums and over the course of time, there is not significant statistical evidence to support the claims. That said, the psychosocial patterns and trends that were found in Mayer's lyrics are consistent with Erikson's theory at macro and micro levels. Although the psychosocial trends that will be discussed are speculative, they are worthy of consideration for future researchers who are interested in non-traditional methods. Furthermore, the psychosocial trends that appear to manifest in Mayer's life are interesting and suggestive of findings in previous identity research.

This chapter will be organized as follows: First, the artist's broad psychosocial developmental patterns will be presented in order to integrate the findings and establish a base for the overall discussion. Second, I will provide an overview of the significant life events (romantic relationships, career shifts, etc.) that occurred in John Mayer's life and the associated patterns that emerged. Third, the psychosocial stages (identity, intimacy, generativity) and

broader developmental themes that ebb and flow over time will be discussed. Fourth, the external events that occurred in the artist's life and influenced his development are considered in greater depth, while psychosocial frequency distributions will also be reviewed and interpreted. The fourth section will be arranged chronologically from the first album released in 2001 to the last album released in 2017; however, psychosocial content spanning across albums will also be included in the suitable segments. Interviews, magazine articles, social media posts, and other resources available to the public will be utilized to support the findings. Likewise, psychosocial subcategories will be discussed in the section when appropriate, and priority will be given to the highest frequency distributions. I will conclude the chapter with a review of the methods used in the study and suggestions for future research.

Summary of Findings

Mayer's Psychosocial Preoccupation Over Time. Mayer's frequency distribution patterns are consistent with the findings in the Stewart et al. (1998) and Peterson and Stewart (1990) studies, along with Erikson's concept that psychosocial development is sequential. That is, one should expect a decreasing concern with identity coupled with an increasing preoccupation with intimacy in young adulthood, while generative concerns should increase towards midlife. The psychosocial development mined from Mayer's music lyrics support the aforementioned course of development. As previously mentioned, Erikson's notion of stage sequencing occurs at the macro level of psychosocial development; however, at the micro level, ego identity development is more circular within and across stages. Furthermore, a continuous/discontinuous developmental phenomenon is found the more one zooms into the interaction between external life events and the self. To best interpret the findings in the study, Mayer's psychosocial development will be discussed at the macro and micro levels.

Significant Life Events. In order to interpret psychosocial frequency distributions, major life events unique to the case study must be considered. It would be challenging to make sense of developmental patterns without taking into account external life events and the impact they have on the self. This section will provide an overview and guide of the significant external events that occurred in John Mayer's life and the associated psychosocial patterns that manifested in his lyrics. The important life events mentioned in this section have significant support in the public sphere and will be referenced accordingly. Events and patterns will be arranged chronologically in order to maintain congruity in the chapter (see Table 11).

Table 11. *Timeline of External Events in John Mayer's Life*

Year	Life Event
1997	Enrolled at Berklee School of Music
1998	Left Berklee School of Music and moved to Atlanta, Georgia
2001	*Room for Squares* is released
2002	In a relationship with Jennifer Love-Hewitt In a relationship with Vanessa Carlton
2003	*Heavier Things* is released
2005	In a relationship with Rhona Mitra
2006	*Continuum* is released In a relationship with Jessica Simpson
2007	In a relationship with Cameron Diaz In a relationship with Minka Kelly
2008	In a relationship with Jennifer Anniston

2009	In a relationship with Jennifer Anniston
	Battle Studies is released
	Parents divorced
	In a relationship with Scheana Marie
	In a relationship with Taylor Swift
2010	In a relationship with Taylor Swift
	Playboy interview is released
	Rolling Stone interview is released
	In a relationship with Reena Hammer
2011	Underwent surgery to remove vocal cord granuloma
2012	*Born and Raised* is released
	Moved to Montana
	Vocal cord granuloma returned and underwent another removal surgery
	In a relationship with Katy Perry
2013	In a relationship with Katy Perry
	Paradise Valley is released
2014	In a relationship with Katy Perry
2016	Became sober from alcohol
2017	*The Search for Everything* is released

Before the release of *Room for Squares* in 2001, John Mayer attended Berklee College of Music for two semesters and then moved to Atlanta, Georgia (Small, 2005). With the exception of being signed to a major record label, Mayer's external life events seem fairly normative, which is indicative of the psychosocial patterns that manifested on the album. That is, identity preoccupation was highest followed by intimacy concerns. No generativity was found on the artist's debut album. John Mayer dated fellow celebrities, Jennifer Love-Hewitt and Vanessa Carlton in between the releases of *Room for Squares* and *Heavier Things* (Leight, 2015). Although Mayer became a celebrity himself following the success of his first album, no other

significant life events are known. Correspondingly, intimacy concerns were greater than identity

or generativity concerns on his sophomore album, which given his age, follows a typical

psychosocial developmental course. Mayer was rumored to be in a relationship with Rhona

Metra after the release of *Heavier Things* and before the release of *Continuum* in 2006 (Leight,

2015). Other significant life events unique to the artist are not known; however, the United States

was engrossed in two major wars with Iraq and Afghanistan at the time. Interestingly, Mayer's

identity preoccupation was higher than either intimacy or generativity concerns on *Continuum*

and primarily manifested in the identity subcategory, values. In the three-year period following

the release of *Continuum* and prior to the release of *Battle Studies* in 2009, Mayer dated several

celebrities: Jessica Simpson, Cameron Diaz, Minka Kelly and Jennifer Anniston (Leigh, 2015).

Not surprisingly, intimacy preoccupation was higher by a wide margin than either identity or

generativity concerns on the artist's fourth album.

Following a similar serial dating pattern after the release of *Battle Studies* in 2009 until

2010, the public record indicates that Mayer was in a relationship with the following celebrities:

Jennifer Anniston, Taylor Swift, Scheana Marie, and Reena Hammer (Leight, 2015). This was a

challenging time for John Mayer. His parents divorced in 2009 (Ferrari, 2009), he received a

great amount of public backlash after the release of two controversial interviews with Playboy

(see Tannenbaum, 2010) and Rolling Stone (see Hedegaard, 2010) magazines in 2010, and he

was diagnosed with a vocal cord granuloma that required surgery in 2011 (Perpetua, 2011). The

accumulation of the aforementioned events and Mayer's response to them manifest in the lyrics

on *Born and Raised,* released in 2012. Intimacy preoccupation was the highest, followed closely

by identity and generativity concerns. Psychosocial content was clustered closer together than

previous albums and was more multifaceted in nature. That is, when one psychosocial stage

appeared, it was often linked to at least one and often both of the other stages. This was a new feature in Mayer's writing, and it continued to manifest on subsequent albums. Prior to the release of *Paradise Valley* in 2013, Mayer bought a house and settled in Montana (Eells, 2012), his granuloma returned (Donnelly, 2012), and he began dating Katy Perry (Leight, 2015). Identity concerns appeared the most, trailed closely by intimacy and generativity preoccupation. Similar to the lyrics on *Born and Raised*, the psychosocial content was clustered close together. It is important to note *Paradise Valley* was released only one year after the previous album. Mayer did not release another album until 2017, *The Search for Everything*. In the time between album releases, the artist's relationship with Katy Perry ended, and he did not date anyone else (Leight, 2015). Mayer also became sober during this time. Intimacy preoccupation occurred the most, followed by identity and generativity concerns. There was more separation between intimacy and the other psychosocial stages; however, the multifaceted connections still appeared. The external events that occurred in Mayer's life and the associated category and subcategory frequency distributions will be discussed in greater detail later in the chapter.

Identity. Identity themes were greater in Mayer's first, third, and sixth albums; however, his overall concern with identity declined over time. Moreover, identity concerns were greater than intimacy or generativity concerns on the aforementioned albums. As previously mentioned, identity can be reconstructed at least three times following adolescence and can occur more often if an individual is confronted with identity challenging events (Marcia, 2010). The reformulation periods are what Stephen et al. (1992) referred to as MAMA cycles. The results from the analysis indicate Mayer experienced at least three of these moratorium-achievement cycles over the course of 17 years, with the most profound cycle occurring following the release of his fourth album and manifesting on the lyrics of his fifth and sixth albums. It is interesting to note that

these patterns coincide with major life events like the public backlash Mayer received over comments he made in Playboy and Rolling Stone magazine interviews released in 2010 coupled with his parents' divorce the previous year. His parents' divorce and the public's reaction to his interviews will be discussed in greater detail in the fourth section; however, it is worth noting and evident in the lyrics of his fifth and sixth albums that a significant life event amplified his preoccupation with identity.

Intimacy. Intimacy concerns were highest in Mayer's second, fourth, fifth, and seventh albums, and yet, overall intimacy preoccupation declined over time. Similar to the identity findings, intimacy concerns were greater than identity or generativity concerns on the previously mentioned albums. That said, there was little discrepancy between identity and intimacy concerns on the fifth album, while generativity concerns were at their highest level overall. Mayer's intimate preoccupation on the second album indicates an intimacy crisis had begun, while intimacy concerns on the fourth album reached a fever pitch following several failed relationships. Intimacy concerns plummeted on the fifth album, and yet, were slightly higher overall, but appear to be tied to identity and generativity preoccupation. The second and seventh albums follow a similar psychosocial pattern as the fourth album, albeit milder ones. That is, intimacy concerns were much higher than identity and generativity concerns by a wide margin on the fourth album; however, the gap in frequency distributions was much smaller on the second and seventh albums.

Generativity. While traces of generative preoccupation first appeared on the second album and gradually trended upward across albums, generative concerns were never as prominent as identity or intimacy. The highest level of generativity appeared on the fifth album and remained fairly stable on successive albums. Moreover, once generativity increased on the fifth album,

57

generative levels were similar on albums that followed. The increase and stability of generativity may indicate an imminent crisis that could appear on the lyrics of his next album. The stability of generativity over time may also be explained by Mayer's newfound sobriety that occurred between his sixth and seventh albums. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that Mayer's maintained sobriety could be an integral part of his redemptive life narrative, which McAdams's (2006) model would identify as a recovery story. Recovery stories are usually demarcated by a personal narrative that includes overcoming addiction and moving into the realization of original goodness (McAdams, 2006). These two features appeared in the lyrics of his later albums and will be discussed in the next section. If the aforementioned is true, it could be a line of inquiry for future research.

Impact of External Life Events on Psychosocial Development

Room for Squares (2001). John Mayer's debut album was released in 2001 when he was 23-years-old. Given Mayer's age at the time of release, one would expect to find a greater preoccupation with identity than either intimacy or generativity in his lyrics. Expectations confirmed the findings as identity concerns were higher than intimacy concerns by a small margin, while generative themes did not appear at all. There is scant knowledge about Mayer's life before the release of his first album. It is known that he enrolled at the age of 19 at the Berklee College of Music; however, he left after two semesters and moved to Atlanta, Georgia to pursue a career in music full time (Small, 2005). He cultivated a loyal following in the Southeast over the next couple of years and eventually garnered the interest of record label executives (Small, 2005). With the exception of his enrolling in college, dropping out, moving to another state, and being signed by a label, no other significant life events are known about the years preceding his first album release. It is worth noting that transitions to and from college and

relocating are fairly normative life events for most adolescents and/or young adults; however, being signed by a record label is not. That said, no reference to this unique event was found in the lyrics of Mayer's first album, and therefore, identity themes that were found follow a typical path.

The three identity subcategories that appeared the most on the album were general identity themes, sameness and continuity, and values. While other identity subcategories ebbed and flowed across albums and no discernable patterns were found, sameness and continuity themes appeared in tandem with overall identity preoccupation. That is, on the albums in which identity preoccupation was high, sameness and continuity images were high as well. Conversely, when identity concerns were low on an album, sameness and continuity trended down too. Stewart and Colleagues (1988) were perplexed by Vera Brittain's low usage of the sameness and continuity category as they factored in the high degree of external and internal change that she went through. They went on to postulate that sameness and continuity may be more prevalent at the end of the identity formation process and dependent upon a well-formed stable identity. This observation is consistent with the current findings as Mayer was several years older than Brittain when he wrote the songs for his first album. Regardless, sameness and continuity scores on his albums appear to be important for at least two reasons. First, Mayer's sameness and continuity scores occur at the same frequency as his overall identity concerns across albums, which suggest that his sense of internal and external change is tied to his overall preoccupation with identity. And secondly, external life events seem to amplify identity concerns.

Intimacy preoccupation was nearly as high as identity preoccupation with general intimacy concerns occurring the most, followed by genital sexuality and shared identity respectively. Genital sexuality themes were the greatest on *Room for Squares* and declined over

time, while shared identity and mutuality of devotion themes increased on successive albums. This course of development is consistent with the notion that the primary drive during the intimacy crisis is for mutual understanding and psychological companionship. Sexual connection may be a significant aspect of intimacy development; however, it may not (Marcia, 2010). Mayer's shift from a preoccupation of sexual themes on his first album to concerns with shared identity and mutuality of devotion on successive albums seem to indicate a natural progression within the intimacy stage. Furthermore, the increase in mutuality of devotion and shared identity concerns may be coupled with a modification in sexual lyrical content. For example, most of the intimacy themes that appeared in "Your Body is a Wonderland" (Mayer, 2001) were coded as genital sexuality:

> We got the afternoon, You got this room for two, One thing I've left to do discover me discovering you, One mile to every inch of your skin like porcelain, One pair of candy lips and your bubblegum tongue, And if you want love, We'll make it, Swim in a deep sea of blankets, Take all your big plans and break 'em, This is bound to be a while. (track 4)

No other song in the study had as much genital sexuality content, and genital sexuality was the only intimacy subcategory across albums that had more positive than minus frequency distributions. Moreover, when sexual preoccupation occurred on successive albums, the lyrics were usually not as descriptive and inherently more benign. On Mayer's most recent album, *The Search for Everything,* "Love on the weekend" (Mayer, 2017) had a noteworthy amount of sexual preoccupation; however, the lyrics were less vivid:

> Love on the weekend, Love on the weekend, Like only we can, Like only we can, Love on the weekend, Love on the weekend. (track 4)

It is difficult to assess whether the reduction of evocative material in Mayer's lyrics is evidence of intimate maturation or something else not related to intimacy development; however, the lyrical trend is worth noting. Generative concerns did not appear on his first album.

Heavier Things (2003). The artist's sophomore album was released in 2003, a month before he turned 25-years-old. Lyrical content indicated that Mayer was concerned more with intimacy than either identity or generativity. This developmental shift suggests some identity achievement occurred following the success of Mayer's first album, while his intimacy crisis crystallized as he became involved in some of his first publicized relationships with other celebrities. The public record specifies that he was two relationships (see Table 11) in between the releases of *Room for Squares* and *Heavier Things* (Leight, 2015). As for intimacy subcategory frequency distribution, general intimacy concerns appeared the most, followed by shared identity and mutuality of devotion. Although general intimacy concerns is the most prevalent intimacy subcategory across albums, shared identity preoccupation peaks on *Heavier Things*, trends downward on successive albums, while mutuality of devotion concerns increase over time. Analogous to the sequencing in identity subcategory preoccupation finding in the Stewart et al. study (1988), Mayer's shared identity preoccupation peaks early and declines on successive albums, while mutuality of devotion increases and then ebbs and flows over time. Interestingly, secure identity concerns are rarely found in his lyrics. It is possible that intimacy sequencing may follow a universal pattern with secure identity preoccupation occurring towards the end of the stage. While some evidence for identity sequencing was found in previous research, intimacy sequencing has not been discussed when similar methods have been employed. This may be an area for future research as Mayer's intimacy sequencing seems to follow a reasonable theoretical path; however, the findings in this study are only suggestive and inconclusive.

As for identity subcategory distribution, values occurred the most followed by general concerns and sameness and continuity. Values was the third most prevalent identity subcategory on the first album, the most prominent on the second and third albums with a sharp increase on the latter; however, it rarely appeared on successive albums. There were two tracks in particular on *Heavier Things* riddled with values concerns, "New Deep" and "Something's Missing." In "New Deep," Mayer (2003, track 4) questions the existence of God, God's lack of movement towards him, and the feebleness of man, while he pines about the meaning of life and the emptiness he feels in "Something's Missing" (Mayer, 2003):

> I've searched for joy, But bought it all, It doesn't help the hunger pains and thirst I'd
>
> have to drown to ever satiate, Something's missing, And I don't know how to fix it,
>
> Something's missing, And I don't know what it is, And I don't know what it is, At all.
>
> (track 3)

Stewart and colleagues (1988) suggest a heightened values preoccupation may indicate an earlier stage of identity formation in which self-definition is active and unfinished. Given the higher amount of values preoccupation on Mayer's first three albums, and little to none on successive albums, this would make sense. That said, Mayer's concern with sameness and continuity early and across albums is suggestive of a later form of identity (Stewart et al., 1988). It is difficult to know whether the discrepancy is unique to Mayer's identity formation process, a problem with the coding system, or something else. Further research is needed to answer this question and tease out what is individual and what is universal as it pertains to identity formation.

This is the first album in which generative preoccupation appears, and it manifests primarily on the Grammy award winning hit, "Daughters" (Small, 2005). What is interesting about the generative content that appears in the lyrics of "Daughters" is that it seems to be tied to

Mayer's intimacy concerns. He begins the song by discussing a challenging relationship he is in and starts to question the origin of his mate's ambivalence in the relationship. This leads into Mayer's curiosity about the impact one's family of origin has on development and a plea for both parents to "be good to their daughters" for the sake of future relationships and generations (Mayer, 2003, track 8).

Continuum (2006). John Mayer's third studio album was released a month before his 29th birthday in September of 2006. Identity concerns appeared the most, followed closely by intimacy, while there were only traces of generativity. Moreover, *Continuum* had the greatest amount of identity preoccupation than any of the other albums. As for identity subcategory frequency distribution, values were most prevalent, trailed by sameness and continuity and confirmation by intimates. Most of the values preoccupation that appeared on the album occurred in two songs, "Belief" and "Waiting on the World to Change." In "Belief," Mayer (2006) is troubled by the influence personal convictions can have on public policy:

> What puts a hundred thousand children in the sand, Belief can, Belief can, What puts the folded flag inside of a mother's hand, Belief can, Belief can. (track 3)

Similarly, in "Waiting on the World to Change," he (Mayer, 2006) questions the previous generation's leadership decisions in current world affairs:

> Now we see everything that's going on with the world and those who lead it, We just feel like we don't have the means to rise above and beat it, So we just keep waiting, waiting on the world to change, We keep on waiting, waiting on the world to change. (track 1)

What is interesting about the values content on this album in comparison to the previous album, *Heavier Things*, is Mayer's preoccupation has shifted outward towards society. Mayer's values concerns on *Heavier Things* were more personal as he questioned the existence of God and the

63

meaning of life; however, on *Continuum*, he's bothered by the state of world. Although little is known about Mayer's personal life between his second and third albums, the United States and other parts of the world were grappling with controversial wars in Iraq and Afghanistan at the time. Given the aforementioned, Mayer's identity formation process appears to have been influenced by the increase in societal anxiety and is evident in the lyrics of this third album. As for themes of sameness and continuity, similar to previous albums, it manifests on *Continuum* and follows a frequency pattern analogous to his overall identity preoccupation. Prior to the album's release the previous year, Mayer wrote in a column in Esquire (2005), "I'm obsessed with time lately, constantly crunching the numbers to get some sense of where I stand in the continuum" (p. 42). His concern with sameness and continuity is the most indicative in "Stop This Train" (Mayer,

2006):

> Don't know how else to say it, Don't want to see my parents go, One generation's length away from fighting life out on my own, Stop this train, I wanna get off and go home again, I can't take the speed it's moving in, I know I can't, But honestly won't someone stop this train, So scared of getting older, I'm only good at being young, So I play the numbers game to find a way to say that life has just begun. (track 7)

In comparison to Mayer's values preoccupation in which he is challenging the societal status quo and advocating for progress, his sameness and continuity concerns trend in the opposite direction. Marcia (2010) found brief diffusion periods are possible when the current identity structure is being challenged. This diffusion period is considered "regression with a purpose" as the previous structure crumbles while a new one is formed (Marcia, 2010). Considering the aforementioned paradox and Mayer's high level of overall identity preoccupation on *Continuum*,

64

it is probable he began his second significant moratorium cycle following some identity achievement after the success of his first album. Since there is an absence of information regarding the personal external events that occurred in Mayer's life when he was writing the album, it is difficult to assess what may have initiated the crisis. However, given the state of affairs in the world at the time, the content in Mayer's lyrics indicating his concern with them, and previous research supporting the notion that societal conflict impacts development, it is reasonable to suggest Mayer's reaction to world events may have been enough to stir an internal crisis. Even some of the intimacy themes that manifested on the album appear to be linked to his identity concerns, especially sameness and continuity. For example, in "I Don't Trust Myself," Mayer (2006) wrote:

> No I'm not the man I used to be lately, See you met me at an interesting time, If my past
>
> is any sign of your future, you should be warned before I let you inside. (track 2)

It is difficult to assess the extent to which Mayer's identity preoccupation is tied to his intimacy concerns; however, the data suggest a relationship exists.

In regard to intimacy subcategory frequency distribution, general concerns occurred the most, followed by shared identity and secure identity. Shared identity themes begin to trend downward on successive albums, while secure identity images were the highest on *Continuum*. Interestingly, secure identity themes occurred the most in, "I Don't Trust Myself," the same song in which sameness and continuity themes appeared. While traces of generativity appeared on the album, none of the generative themes seem to be tied to other significant developmental concerns, namely identity.

Battle Studies (2009). Mayer was 32-years-old when his fourth studio album, *Battle Studies,* was released in the fall of 2009. Intimacy concerns occurred the most on the album, followed by

much lower identity and generativity preoccupation. Not only did intimacy images occur most on the album in comparison to identity and generativity, but intimacy levels were the highest overall on *Battle Studies* and the highest of any other psychosocial stage across albums. That is, intimacy preoccupation on the current album was higher than any other psychosocial stage on this album as well as the others. As for intimacy subcategory distribution, general concerns appeared the most, followed by mutuality of devotion and shared identity. Mutuality of devotion peaks on *Battle Studies*, declines on the next two albums, and increases again on the last, *The Search for Everything*. The public record indicates Mayer was romantically involved with at least four other celebrities in between the releases of *Continuum* and *Battle Studies* (Leight, 2015). Mutuality of devotion preoccupation would be heightened during this time and expressed in his lyrics considering the amount of relationships that began and ended during the three-year-period. For example, Mayer (2009) described the committal back and forth he experienced in the following lyrics:

> Friends, lovers, or nothing, There can only be one, Friends, lovers, or nothing, We'll never be the in-between, So give it up, You whisper 'Come on over' cause you're two drinks in, But in the morning I will say good-bye again, Think we'll never fall into the jealous game, The streets will flood with blood of those who felt the same… Anything other than yes is no, Anything other than stay is go, Anything less than I love you is lying. (track 11)

"Friends, Lovers, or Nothing" had the greatest amount of mutuality of devotion images on the album; however, analogous themes appeared on at least three other tracks. In "Half of My Heart," Mayer (2009) wrote:

> Your faith is strong, But I can only fall short for so long, Down the road, Later on, You

will hate that I never gave more to you than half of my heart, But I can't stop loving you.

(track 3)

In "Heartbreak Warfare," Mayer (2009, track 1) penned, "No one really ever wins," and in "Perfectly Lonely," he (Mayer, 2009, track 5) wrote, "I don't belong to anyone, Nobody belongs to me." Interestingly, thematic elements in Mayer's lyrics are similar to the Simon and Garfunkel lyrics Marcia (2010) utilized to describe the position of *isolate*. Orlofsky, Marcia, and Lesser (1973) found an individual who has yet to move beyond superficial dating relationships, who dates regularly (sometimes the same girl for several months), who enjoys sex—going from one conquest to another, and who is more interested in what he can get out of a relationship than establishing a mutually close relationship fits an intimacy status defined as, *stereotype relationship*. A subtype of this status is *pseudo-intimate*, in which the individual has made a lasting commitment to one woman; however rather than being truly intimate, he seems to be going through some of the motions (Orlofsky et al., 1973). As Erikson put it, "A mutual isolation in the guise of intimacy" (Orlofsky et al. 1973). Furthermore, commitment in the relationship does not originate organically and is instead, superimposed (Marcia, 2010). Given the revolving door of relationships in Mayer's life at the time and the mutuality of devotion preoccupation found in his lyrics, he fits the criteria for the intimacy status of *stereotype relationship* and its subtype, *pseudo-intimate*.

Identity and generativity preoccupation were much lower on *Battle Studies,* while intimacy concerns were observantly high, a pattern that will appear again on the last album, *The Search for Everything*. Considering the Mayer's psychosocial frequency distribution at the time, it suggests that he's in the midst of an intimacy crisis that has not been resolved. The failed celebrity relationships between *Continuum* and *Battle Studies* are the most prevalent and

documented features of Mayer's life during this period and are apparent in the lyrics of his music. Because identity and generativity concerns were significantly lower on this album in comparison to intimacy, novel subcategory patterns were not easily discernable. That said, there was an uptick in the identity subcategory, preferences and tastes; however, a majority of the codable images were in the context of relationships. Therefore, although identity concerns were down, when they did manifest, they seem to be tied to Mayer's overall preoccupation with intimacy. Interestingly, confirmation by society was the third highest identity subcategory on the album and continues to trend upwards on the next album, *Born and Raised*. This upward trend is significant, because it may indicate an increase in vulnerability to negative public opinion that ultimately manifests in Mayer's life and in the lyrics of *Born and Raised*. Since identity preoccupation did drop significantly on this album following the sharp increase on the previous album, Mayer may have resolved some of his previous identity crisis.

Born and Raised (2012). Mayer's fifth studio album was released in May of 2012, when he was 34-years-old. Intimacy preoccupation was the highest, followed closely by identity and generativity concerns. In comparison to the other six albums, psychosocial preoccupation on *Born and Raised* occurred more evenly across stages. That is, there was much less frequency separation between identity, intimacy, and generativity, and psychosocial concerns across stages appeared at similar rates. Therefore, since the album was more even in regard to psychosocial frequency distribution, it was also more thematically diverse as a result. In order to explain the reduced psychosocial separation and subsequent thematic diversity, it is important to examine the significant life events that occurred in the artist's life between *Battle Studies* and *Born and Raised*. Romantically, Mayer was rumored to have been involved in several relationships with other celebrities from 2009 until 2010 (Leight, 2015). The artist's serial dating pattern appears to

be a behavioral continuation from the time between *Continuum* and *Battle Studies*. However, Mayer's involvement in romantic relationships dwindled in 2011. The dating cessation followed two significant life events: his parent's divorce and the public backlash (see Coscarelli, 2017 & Catucci, 2018) he received after the release of two controversial magazine interviews. According to a local newspaper (Ferrari, 2009) where his parents resided at the time, Richard and Margaret Mayer divorced in May of 2009. In winter the following year, Rolling Stone and Playboy magazines each released interviews three weeks apart they had conducted with Mayer. Although each article is heavy laden with salacious remarks, specific comments made by Mayer garnered more attention, and in turn, more criticism. For example, when the interviewer from Playboy (Tannenbaum, 2010) asked Mayer if "Black women throw themselves" at him, he said, "I don't think I open myself to it. My dick is sort of like a white supremacist. I've got a Benetton heart and a fuckin' David Duke cock. I'm going to start dating separately from my dick." Later in the interview, Mayer described Jessica Simpson as "sexual napalm" (Tannenbaum, 2010). The comments in the Rolling Stone interview were equally provocative. For example, Mayer said the following (Hedegaard, 2010):

> "Do you think it's going to take meeting someone who I admire more than I admire myself? But isn't it also about a beautiful vagina? Aren't we talking about a matrix of a couple of different things here? Like, you need to have them be able to go toe-to-toe with you intellectually. But don't they also have to have a vagina you could pitch a tent on and just camp out on for, like, a weekend? Doesn't that have to be there, too? The Joshua Tree of vaginas?"

Considering Mayer's continued serial relationship history as well as the aforementioned comments from both interviews, it further supports the notion that he was currently in the

intimacy status, *stereotype relationship* and its subtype, *pseudo-intimate*.

Intimacy status aside, it is my belief that Mayer's reaction to his parents' divorce and the public's reaction to the comments he made in the Playboy and Rolling Stone interviews initiated his most substantial state of moratorium in the study sample. Disequilibration can occur after particularly stressing life events (i.e. parents' divorce) and in tandem with other expectable changes (Marcia, 2010). Ironically, Mayer was diagnosed with a vocal cord granuloma in 2011, which limited his ability to talk, sing, and ultimately delayed the release of the album (Perpetua, 2011). The health challenges he faced manifest in the lyrics on the next album, *Paradise Valley,* and will be discussed in the next section. However, it is worth noting that this significant life event contributed to his overall state of moratorium. A moratorium that eventually leads to the most profound developmental shift in Mayer's life to date. Therefore, what has been mentioned thus far pertaining to the events in Mayer's life is a continuation of a developmental course that appeared in the lyrics of his previous albums, namely *Battle Studies*. However, the lyrical content on *Born and Raised* indicates a substantial developmental shift had occurred and was in the process of occurring across three psychosocial realms. For example, the three intimacy subcategories that appeared most on the album were general concerns, shared identity, and mutuality of devotion. General concerns and mutuality of devotion preoccupation decreased sharply from the previous album, while shared identity increased slightly and manifested on the song, "A Place to Call Home." Mayer (2012, track 11) wrote, "Little by little, Inch by inch, We built a yard with a garden in the middle of it, It ain't much but it's a start, You got me swaying right along to the song in your heart, And a face to call home." In comparison to the intimacy themes that appeared on previous albums that were more immediate and evident of relational stuck-togetherness and jealousy, *Born and Raised* was qualitatively different. When intimacy

70

preoccupation manifested on the album, the future was emphasized and often appeared in tandem with sameness and continuity and generativity concerns. This was a new feature in Mayer's writing and appears on subsequent albums as well. Not only was the content more psychosocially multifaceted, but the lyrics indicated some maturation had occurred, or at least a desire to move towards it. This phenomenon was most evident in the title track (Mayer, 2012) and its reprise:

> Now and then I pace my place, I can't retrace how I got here, I cheat the light to check my face, It's slightly harder than last year, And all at once it gets hard to take, It gets hard to fake what I won't be, Cause one of these days I'll be born and raised, And it's such a waste to grow up lonely, I still have dreams, They're not the same, They don't fly as high as they used to… I still got time, I still got faith, I call on both of my brothers, I got a mom, I got a dad, but they do not have each other, So line on up and take your place, and show your face to the morning, Cause one of these days you'll be born and raised, And it all comes on without warning. (track 6)

Evident in "Born in Raised" is Mayer's state of moratorium, and conversely, his state of achievement in "Born and Raised Reprise:"

> Born and raised, Locks of brown and streaks of gray, I was brought up in brighter days, It's good to say now I'm born and raised, Born and raised, In half the time I'll be twice my age, Better learn how to turn the page, Cause time is strange when you're born and raised, Born and raised. (Mayer, 2012, track 12)

Additional evidence of moratorium and achievement appeared in "Shadow Days," the first released single of the album, which may have also been Mayer's response to the public backlash he received following the release of the Playboy and Rolling Stone articles. Mayer (2012) writes:

Did you know that you could be wrong and swear you're right, Some people been known

to do it all their lives, But you find yourself alone just like you found yourself before,

Like I found myself in pieces on the hotel floor, Hard times help me see, I'm a good man

with a good heart, Had a tough time, got a rough start, But I finally learned to let it go,

Now I'm right here and I'm right now and I'm open, Knowing somehow that my shadow

days are over, My shadow days are over now, Well I ain't no trouble maker, And I never

meant her harm, But it doesn't mean I didn't make it hard to carry on, Well it sucks to be

honest and it hurts to be real, But it's nice to make some love that I can finally feel. (track

3)

All three psychosocial stages manifested in "Born and Raised," while two (identity and intimacy)

appeared in "Shadow Days," and only one (identity) occurred in "Born and Raised Reprise." The

lyrics in "Born and Raised Reprise" are primarily past tense and thematically achievement laden,

while "Born and Raised" and "Shadow Days" have higher rates of content that would be

associated with moratorium. The deconstruction that occurs during a moratorium would lend

itself to examining several facets of the self, which would include various psychosocial themes

across stages. Conversely, achievement and commitment would chiefly manifest in ego strength,

namely identity, which is woven into each stage across the lifespan. This phenomenon seems to

occur in the artist's lyrics on *Born and Raised*; however, further research is needed.

Other parts of the Rolling Stone interview were less sensational and more thoughtful.

Regarding the aftermath of his parents' divorce, Mayer said he had felt slightly adrift

(Hedegaard, 2010). He continued, "I was in L.A., making the record, when it happened. You get

orphaned. I never went home. I never went back to the home I grew up in. I never went and saw

it again. It happened. My house is gone" (Hedegaard, 2010). Taking into account Mayer's

comments about feeling adrift after his parents' divorce and not being able to return home, sameness and continuity preoccupation was the highest identity subcategory on the album. The extent to which Mayer's sameness and continuity concerns are tied to external life events is unclear; however, as previously mentioned, sameness and continuity themes follow a similar trajectory to his overall identity preoccupation. *Born and Raised* is no different. Confirmation by society and identifications filled out the top three identity subcategories that manifested on the album. General concerns declined and continue to trend downward on the next two albums, which indicates an increase in thematic specificity regarding Mayer's overall identity preoccupation. Two generativity subcategories appeared on the album, general concerns and productivity. Most of the productivity themes appeared in the song, "Walt Grace's Submarine Test," a fictional tale about a man who designs and builds a submarine and takes a successful journey in it much to the chagrin of his wife and friends. Some productivity and identity themes manifested in "Queen of California," which was a challenging song to interpret at first. However, after further examination, it seems that Mayer is referring to himself as the "queen of California" in the song and is yearning for a change within self as well as his career. For example, he mentions two other musicians and his desire to emerge towards the success they found (Mayer, 2012):

> Looking for the sun that Neil Young hung after the gold rush of 1971… Joni wrote Blue
>
> in her house by the sea, I gotta believe there's another color waiting on me to set me free.
>
> (track 1)

This is noteworthy because it is the first time Mayer has been this explicit in his lyrics about his career. The lyrics indicate that his preoccupation with productivity is tied to identity concerns, and that his overall shift towards maturation on the album is occurring multifacetedly across

psychosocial stages. Productivity continues to trend upward and is the most prominent generativity subcategory on the next two albums, *Paradise Valley* and *The Search for Everything*.

Paradise Valley (2013). The artist's sixth studio album was released in the summer of 2013, he was 35-years-old at the time. It is worth mentioning that *Paradise Valley* had the fewest coded songs of any album in the sample. Identity preoccupation was the highest, followed by intimacy and generativity concerns. The psychosocial frequency distribution is consistent with the patterns found on albums one and three; however, frequency distributions are clustered closer together on *Paradise Valley*, similar to the tight clustering on *Born and Raised*. In between the aforementioned albums, Mayer's granuloma returned, he had to have surgery again and cancelled the tour for *Born and Raised* as a result (Donnelly, 2012). He also moved from California to Montana (Eells, 2012) during this time and began dating fellow musician, Katy Perry (Leight, 2015), who appears in a song on the album. As for identity subcategories, identifications appeared the most, followed by sameness and continuity and traits. Identification preoccupation primarily occurred in "I Will Be Found," a song about Mayer's struggle to restructure past and present identifications. Mayer (2013) wrote,

> It doesn't matter where you roam when no one's left to call you home, I might have strayed a bit too far, I'm countin' all the moonlit stars, I'm a little lost at sea
> I'm a little birdie in a big old tree, Ain't nobody looking for me here out on the highway (track 7).

Given the profound state of moratorium Mayer was in before the release of *Born and Raised*, it would make sense that he would continue to examine and integrate former and current identifications in his life. There was some identification preoccupation on albums one and five;

however, identification concerns peak on album six and do not appear on the next album. High

degrees of sameness and continuity preoccupation occurred in "Waitin' on the Day," along with

intimacy and generativity themes, which is analogous to the diverse psychosocial manifestation

that appeared on the previous album. Of the eight songs that were coded on *Paradise Valley*, four

had identity, intimacy, *and* generativity themes, while the other four had at least two distinct

psychosocial stage themes. "Waitin' on the Day" is primarily about Mayer's desire for a secure

relationship in which he can age alongside someone else; however, the intimacy concerns also

seem to be linked to his overall identity and generativity preoccupation. For example, Mayer

(2013) wrote:

> Waiting on the day, When my thoughts are my own, When this house is my home,
>
> And plans are made, When you'll be there for me baby, When you'll love me all the way,
>
> When you'll take my side in every little fire fight, When you'll hang your things and stay,
>
> I'm waiting on the day, When my life on the run, Bleaches out in the sun, And shows my
>
> age, Waiting on the day, When that voice comes to say that it's not wrong what you did
>
> for just a kid… Waiting on the day, When these words are in stone, When the kids are all
>
> grown, And we go dancing, Oh, can you do it baby, Can you love me all the way, Will
>
> you tie me tight in little strands of paradise, Will you walk with me before the morning
>
> fades, I'm waiting on the day. (track 3)

Evident in the abovementioned lyrical sample, is Mayer's shift in his intimacy preoccupation.

Similar to the intimacy concerns on *Born and Raised*, he appears to be less occupied with the

immediacy of relationship's success and is instead moving towards a relationship that is longer

lasting and more secure. When asked in a Rolling Stone (Doyle, 2013) interview if he wanted to

get married, Mayer responded, "I want to live a very traditional life with a very untraditional day

job." As for intimacy subcategory frequency distribution, general concerns appeared the most, followed by secure identity and mutuality of devotion.

Productivity was the highest generative subcategory, followed by general concerns. Moreover, not only was productivity the most prevalent generativity subcategory on the album, it was the most prevalent generative subcategory overall across all albums. Mayer's increase in productivity concerns may be connected to his being sidelined in his career following the diagnosis and treatment of the vocal cord granuloma in 2011 and its recurrence and treatment in 2012. Career stagnation would lend itself to increasing levels of generative concern, namely productivity. Productivity preoccupation manifested primarily in, "Badge and Gun," alongside sameness and continuity and intimacy concerns. Interestingly, Mayer's only mention of having children in the entire sample appeared in "Waitin' on the Day."

The Search for Everything (2017). John Mayer's last album in the sample and most recent album to date was released in April of 2017, when he was 39-years-old. Intimacy concerns were greater than identity or generativity concerns, and the album follows an overall psychosocial pattern similar to albums two and four. In the time between the release of his previous album and *The Search for Everything*, Mayer continued to date Katy Perry, although the relationship had starts and stops (Leight, 2015). Even though his relationship with Perry ended sometime in 2015, Mayer has not been involved in any other relationships since then. The highest intimacy subcategory was general concerns, trailed by mutuality of devotion and genital sexuality. Most of the mutuality of devotion preoccupation that occurred on the album manifested in the song, "Still Feel Like Your Man." What is interesting about the mutuality of devotion that appeared in "Still Feel Like Your Man" is that all of the preoccupation was coded positively. This was starkly different than most of the mutuality of devotion that occurred on *Battle Studies*, which

was often coded minus for expressions of jealousy and possessiveness. Positive manifestations of mutuality of devotion also appeared in "Emoji of a Wave." The increase in positive frequency distributions of mutuality of devotion may be another indicator that Mayer's intimacy preoccupation has shifted and is more mature. In a recent interview that was published in The New York Times, Coscarelli (2017) said, "He really wants to settle down." Mayer (Coscarelli, 2017) said, "That's the final frontier, man."

Psychosocial maturation or at least a desire to emerge into it also appeared in identity and generativity concerns. As for identity subcategory distribution, traits occurred the most followed by confirmation by society and values. Mayer's interest in personal growth manifested explicitly in two songs, "Changing" and "In the Blood." Analogous to many of the songs on *Born and Raised* and *Paradise Valley*, psychosocial content appeared across all three stages. Not only was the psychosocial content multifaceted in both songs, but Mayer is questioning his identity and is also expressing a deep desire to change. For example, in "Changing," Mayer (2017) wrote:

I am not done changing, Out on the run, changing, I may be old and I may be young, But I am not done changing… Friends behind their fences looking at me strange, Wondering when I'm gonna come to my senses, But I'm still changing, And I can't change my ways, I see the sky changing, Reminds me of my changing, Wish I could tie me a rope 'round the sun, Cause I am not done changing, Time's been talkin' to me whispering in my ear, Saying follow your heart 'til it tears you apart, But hearts keep changing. (track 6)

During this time, he became sober. In October of 2017, Mayer tweeted, "One year ago today, I decided to give drinking a break. A very personal thing for everyone. For me, a constant return on investment." In a recent study (Schwartz, et al., 2015), researchers found participants who were categorized in a status of "diffused or troubled sense of identity" are at a higher risk of

failing to transition to adulthood and engaging in socially and personally destructive behaviors (i.e. hazardous alcohol use). Although the extent of Mayer's alcohol use is unknown, his decision to become sober suggests it was problem for him. Considering alcohol can truncate growth, Mayer's alcohol consumption may have contributed to some of the issues (i.e. serial dating pattern) that occurred earlier in his life and appeared on previous albums. In contrast, Mayer's sobriety could be an essential component of his redemptive life narrative, in which McAdams's (2006) would demarcate as a recovery story. Recovery narratives often include overcoming addiction and becoming aware of original goodness. In "Shadow Days" on *Born in Raised*, Mayer wrote (2012), "I'm a good man, with a good heart" (track 3). Although the aforementioned lyric was written several years before he became sober, it *was* written during a profound state of moratorium in which the artist was reexamining several facets of his life. Moreover, it is reasonable to posit that his redemptive life story was beginning to unfold earlier and would manifest on his last three albums. Mayer's narrative was becoming richer and manifesting in his lyrics. Nowhere was this more evident than "In the Blood." Mayer (2017) wrote:

> How much of my mother has my mother left in me, How much of my love will be insane to some degree, And what about this feeling that I'm never good enough, Will it wash out in the water, or is it always in the blood, How much of my father am I destined to become, Will I dim the lights inside me just to satisfy someone, Will I let this woman kill me, Or do away with jealous love, Will it wash out in the water, Or is it always in the blood, I can feel the love I want, I can feel the love I need, But it's never gonna come the way I am, Could I change it if I wanted, Can I rise above the flood, Will it wash out in the water, Or is it always in the blood, How much like my brothers, Do my brothers wanna

be, Does a broken home become another broken family, Or will we be there for each

other, Like nobody ever could, Will it wash out in the water, Or is it always in the blood

(track 5).

The generative content in the abovementioned song is thematically similar to the generative

preoccupation in "Daughters," in which Mayer highlights the significance of family relationships

and the impact they can have on individual development. However, in "Daughters," his

generative preoccupation seems tied to a selfish goal of having an easier time in a relationship

and is thus pleading parents to "be good to their daughters." Conversely, the generative

questioning that manifests in "In the Blood" is more personal and sophisticated. Productivity was

the most prevalent generativity subcategory, followed by general concerns. Productivity

concerns appeared the most in "Changing" and "In the Blood."

Conclusion

In conclusion, Mayer's overall psychosocial development followed a predictable

sequential pattern. That is, his identity preoccupation declined over time, while intimacy

concerns were prevalent, and yet ebbed and flowed across albums. Although traces of

generativity occurred earlier in the sample, higher rates appeared later and stabilized; however

more research is needed. Identity preoccupation peaked on the third album, while intimacy

concerns were at their highest levels on the fourth album. Generativity concerns appeared the

most on album five and at similar frequencies on albums six and seven. Albums one, three, and

six had similar psychosocial patterns in so much that identity preoccupation occurred the most,

followed by intimacy and generativity concerns. Interestingly, albums two, four, five, and seven

had analogous psychosocial patterns as well in so much that intimacy preoccupation appeared

the most, followed by identity and generativity concerns. The shifting back and forth between

identity and intimacy prevalence across albums is suggestive of Mayer's MAMA cycles. Generativity frequency distributions were never higher than identity or intimacy distributions on any of the albums. That said, psychosocial distributions were clustered closer together on albums five and six. Mayer's overall identity preoccupation seems to be tied to his sameness and continuity concerns, a subcategory within identity. Moreover, when his overall identity scores rose and fell, so did sameness and continuity at analogous rates. It is unknown the extent sameness and continuity may act on identity preoccupation or if it is a manifestation within the construct; however, further research is needed.

The thematic shift in Mayer's values preoccupation in albums two and three was another interesting finding. In *Heavier Things*, the artist's values preoccupation primarily centered around personal beliefs as he questioned the meaning of life, God's existence, etc. However, on the next album, *Continuum*, Mayer's values preoccupation shifted outward to societal concerns as the nation and other parts of the world were gripped by an international war. Confirmation by society was the most prevalent in albums four and five, with higher distributions occurring in the latter. Taking into account the public backlash Mayer received after his two infamous magazine interviews, his increase in confirmation by society preoccupation seems natural and appropriate.

Identity sequencing was found in this study and in previous studies (Stewart et al., 1988; Peterson & Stewart, 1990); however, the current study discovered intimacy sequencing that has not previously been found or discussed in the literature. Genital sexuality preoccupation occurred the most on the first album and trends downward on successive albums with some variation, while shared identity peaks on the second album and also trends downward over time. Interestingly, mutuality of devotion concerns appeared the most on album four and decreases across successive albums. The subcategory trends upward on album seven; however, the content

is qualitatively different as positive coding images outnumbered negative manifestations. Secure identity preoccupation rarely occurred in the sample; however, it appeared to be trending upwards on the last couple of albums. The aforementioned intimacy sequencing that occurred in the artist's life seems to have universal theoretical features; however, more research is needed to determine what is unique and what is ubiquitous. Findings also indicated that Mayer fit the criteria for the intimacy status of *stereotype relationship* and its subtype *pseudo-intimate* between his third and fourth albums; however, an argument can be made that lyrics on his remaining albums indicate a profound shift occurred in his intimacy preoccupation. This shift is evident in his intimacy subcategory sequencing as well as the thematic diversity that appeared in the lyrics on his fifth, sixth, and seventh albums. The artist's significant developmental transformation occurred following three important life events: his parents' divorce, the public's negative reaction to salacious remarks he made in two magazine interviews, and a vocal cord granuloma that slowed down his career. Following the aforementioned external events and subsequent internal crisis, Mayer matured, or at a minimum, began moving towards maturation. Not only did his intimacy preoccupation qualitatively shift, but identity and generativity concerns were different as well. Mayer's psychosocial preoccupation was more multifaceted and less one-dimensional. Lyrics indicated that all three psychosocial stages were not only being questioned simultaneously in *Born and Raised*, *Paradise Valley*, and *The Search for Everything*, but that growth was occurring across realms and linked together. The findings in the current study also suggest a link between micro (i.e. dating, divorce, alcoholism) and macro (national war) life events and individual psychosocial development, namely the self.

Method Appropriateness

One of the primary research questions in the study was whether Stewart and colleagues'

coding system could be applied to music lyrics. Suffice to say, the coding system proved to be appropriate. Not only was psychosocial content reliably found in John Mayer's lyrics at stage and subcategory levels, but the frequency distribution patterns provided adequate data along with external life events to interpret the artist's developmental life narrative. That said, there were some concerns related to the appropriateness of the using the coding system with music lyrics. The first concern related lyrical phrasing and whether there was an advantage to altering the lyrics to correspond with the musical phrasing or leaving them unaltered. Secondly, there was a concern whether the psychosocial stage should be coded at random or in sequence. Third, it was crucial to discern whether the songs should be coded in chronological order or at random. Following a pilot study (see Appendix A), the following decisions were made:

I. The lyrics should be altered to match the musical phrasing as that fostered a more appropriate codable image.

II. The coding process should occur naturally. No advantage was found whether we coded one stage at a time in order or at random.

III. The order in which the songs were coded should be randomized.

Although a decision was made to alter the lyrics to match the musical phrasing, the more I coded, the more I began to combine discrete lines of lyrics to form one codable image. I found that the rhythmic phrasing was not as important as the contextual information in the adjacent lyrical lines. During the pilot procedure, we found intimacy was often clearer and easier to code than either identity or generativity. Moreover, Taylor Swift's songs had higher frequencies of intimacy than the other two stages. Mayer's lyrics were more multifaceted than Swift's as numerous stages and subcategories could appear in one of his songs, while her songs were more

82

one-dimensional than not. In hindsight, I probably would have selected more complex songs to code in the pilot study to become more proficient in identity and generativity coding.

A unique problem that occurred during the principal study was whether the perceived theme of song should be considered during the coding process, or if the lines should be coded as they are without taking into account what the theme of the song may be. We found that it was most efficacious to code the lyrics based on the overall context of the song. Coding one lyrical line at time proved to be inadequate. Context was important. This was another problem that did not occur during the pilot study as Taylor Swifts songs were not as thematically diverse, and thus, were easier to code.

Interrater agreement at the psychosocial stage level was often high, while most of the interrater agreement discrepancies were a result of codable image discrepancy. That is, when we agreed that a codable image was present in the lyrics, we often coded the image similarly; however, there were times when I coded an image and the second coder did not and vice versa. Therefore, our interrater agreement ratings suffered as a result of what each of us thought constituted a codable image and what did not. It may be efficacious for future researchers to have two separate interrater agreement passes. With this two-pass model, codable units could be judged and assessed in the first pass, while agreed upon units could be utilized to score for developmental themes in the second pass. This two-pass approach would clear up any codable unit discrepancies and psychosocial interrater agreement ratings would likely be higher.

Even though psychosocial interrater agreement at the stage level was often high, there was more variance at the subcategory level. For example, we found it difficult at times to discern whether we should code mutuality of devotion or shared intimacy. That said, we had some shared doubts about how we coded a song, and yet, often coded similarly even though there was

some ambiguity. It was also challenging at times to differentiate between identity and generativity without the foreknowledge of when the song was written in the artist's life. We could usually adequately address this during discussion; however, it may be beneficial for future studies to code songs in chronological order to reduce this discrepancy. NVivo Pro for Windows 11.4.1.1064 was utilized to organize data and assist in the coding process. This proved to be an invaluable tool during the coding process and while the data was being interpreted. I could easily search and find coding frequency distributions that eased the interpretation process.

As for the quantitative analyses, the repeated measures ANOVA model was used exclusively. Other regression models could work; however, this approach proved to be appropriate for the study. Likewise, other researchers (Borckardt, Nash, Murphy, Moore, Shaw, and O'Neil, 2008) have outlined a method for case-based time-series analysis vis-à-vis autocorrelations and the different ways to correct for them that could be appropriate for this line of research as it moves forward. salient

Role of Gender

Taking into account the historical salience of gender in Eriksonian research, it is important to discuss how the role of gender may have impacted the current study. As previously mentioned, gender can moderate identity (see Côté, 2009 & Kroger, 2003) and intimacy development (see Arseth, et al., 2009; Dyk & Adams, 1990; Kail & Cavanaugh, 2013). I am male. The case study subject is male. I am curious how my gender may have altered the coding process and the interpretation of the findings. The second coder is female, and although there was little psychosocial discrepancy in our interrater agreement ratings, it is difficult to assess how gender may have moderated the disagreement that was found. Would the frequency distributions have been different had I used the second coder's results instead of my own?

84

Likewise, would she have interpreted the findings differently? Would she and I find similar psychosocial patterns in a female musician or would the findings be different, and to what extent? It is challenging to answer these questions; however, it is important for future researchers to consider the role that gender may play in this novel line of inquiry. Furthermore, as this form of research moves forward, it is imperative that male and female musicians are studied by male and female researchers, and any differences in the results that can be linked to gender are addressed and accounted for.

Suggestions for Future Research

Specific aspects of the study raised questions that have often occurred in other psychosocial case studies and require further examination. The first curiosity happened during the third statistical analysis. Although no significant results were found, it was noted that charted songs had less thematic plurality than songs that did not. That is, Mayer's charted songs were usually less psychosocially sophisticated than songs that did not chart. This raises questions about the relationship between lyrical thematic singularity and the developmental level of consumers.

The second line of inquiry pertains to Mayer's generative preoccupation, and whether or not it will continue to increase on subsequent albums as he ages. Although this concern was expected as the lyrical sample did not contain material from an age in which the generativity crisis normally crystalizes, some generative preoccupation was found and is trending upwards. Future research is needed not only to further understand Mayer's individual generativity patterns, but it is also imperative to study how generative themes may manifest in the lyrics of other musicians. Another issue that arose was whether intimacy preoccupation has a sequencing pattern analogous to the identity sequencing that was found in the Stewart and colleagues'

85

studies. General intimacy concerns was the most prevalent intimacy subcategory across Mayer's albums. This finding is less significant than the other intimacy patterns that did occur. For example, shared identity peaked on the second album and then declined across subsequent albums, while mutuality of devotion ebbed and flowed across albums; however, it spiked on album four. Genital sexuality and secure identity also ebbed and flowed across albums; however, the frequency distributions were much lower. Furthermore, secure identity rarely appeared. Since intimacy sequencing patterns were evident in this study, it will be important for future researchers to tease out the individual and universal elements nested within the construct. Moreover, are shared identity and mutuality of devotion concerns normally featured at the beginning of the intimacy stage or is this intimacy sequencing pattern unique to Mayer? Similarly, does secure identity preoccupation manifest later in the intimacy stage or is it tied to the quality of a relationship that can occur any time during the stage? In order to efficaciously address the psychosocial patterns that manifest over time, more statistical precision is needed to support the findings. A larger sample size (i.e. more extensive discography in a singular case, several case studies) would allow for more statistical precision.

One of the more interesting findings is Mayer's sameness and continuity frequency distribution pattern paralleled his overall identity preoccupation pattern. That is, when identity concerns increased on an album and then decreased on another, so did sameness and continuity preoccupation. This pattern suggests a more subtle aspect of development that is worthy of future study. For instance, how is sameness and continuity a closely linked feature within the overall construct of identity? Are frequency distribution patterns the result of external changes that occur in life, the subsequent demands of the self that follow, and the preoccupation with the disequilibration that manifest as a result? Or is the pattern similarity indicative of an issue within

86

the coding system or something else. These questions need to be answered, and once again, is this pattern unique to Mayer or is it universal?

Another recommendation for future research relates to the process of identity moratorium and the extent to which it may be connected to moratorium in other stages, namely intimacy and generativity. Stewart et al. (1988) were equally curious how intimacy and generativity crises affect identity development, and Marcia (2010) discussed how individuals in a *pre-intimate* status have characteristics *like* those in a moratorium. Mayer's most profound state of identity moratorium and achievement occurred across multiple stages. That is, the lyrical content that appeared on his fifth and sixth albums was psychosocially multifaceted and thematically diverse. Further research is needed to better understand how moratorium and achievement can manifest in multiple stages and be significantly linked together. Moreover, is this diverse psychosocial preoccupation a process that occurs within a moratorium that is more profound, or could this phenomenon be better explained by cognitive development?

Finally, it is important to note the impact external life events can have on the development of the self as it pertains to ego identity. Depending on the response of the individual, significant life events can contribute to a developmental regression, stagnation, or progression. John Mayer's lyrics indicated a greater degree of uncertainty than certainty, which seems to be connected to the negative life events that occurred in his life. As a result, the current study primarily identified negative external events that happened. To some extent, this is to be expected. Crises are rarely pleasant, and growth may not occur without challenges. Minus subcategory codings outnumbered positive subcategory codings, although the tide began to shift in the latter third of the sample. Some positive events did occur in Mayer's life (i.e. moving to Montana, being in a long-term relationship with Katy Perry, becoming sober); however, they

87

seemed to occur after personal resolution of earlier negative events (i.e. parents' divorce, magazine interviews backlash, vocal cord granulomas). It would be important for future researchers to explore this concept further. That is, to what extent do negative and/or positive life events move us forward, keep us stuck, or pull us back and is there a universal predictable sequence to be found?

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APPENDIX

PILOT STUDY CODING PROCEDURE

To determine the best course forward for the coding procedure in the principal study, a pilot

study was implemented. Since the coding system had not been previously applied to music

lyrics, three different processes within the coding procedure needed to be addressed. The first

process pertained to the lyrics and whether there was an advantage to altering the lyrics to match

the musical phrasing or leave them unaltered. Secondly, I wanted to determine whether there was

any benefit to coding the lyrics in order of psychosocial stage or at random. And third, I thought

it would be helpful to assess whether the songs should be coded in chronological order or at

random. To address the aforementioned concerns, three Taylor Swift songs were selected off

three separate albums released in 2006, 2008, and 2010 respectively, and the following

procedure was initiated:

      I. Code each song lyrically unaltered

      II. Code each song after altering the lyrics to match the musical phrasing

      III. Code each song in order of psychosocial stage (identity, intimacy, generativity)

      IV. Code each song randomly regarding psychosocial stage (intimacy, identity,

         generativity)

      V. Code three of the songs in order of release date (2006, 2008, 2010)

      VI. Code three of the songs out of order (2010, 2006, 2008)

I began by coding one unaltered song in random psychosocial order (intimacy, identity,

generativity); however, I found it difficult to code the lyrics without the context, and at times, the

content of the adjacent sentences. Furthermore, I was losing meaning in the codable phrase, which altered the frequency of the codable images. The more I read and coded the song, the more natural it felt to code the appropriate phrase, even if that meant adjoining a discrete phrase with other phrases. Therefore, it seemed appropriate to alter the lyrics to match the musical phrasing, because altering the lyric allowed for a more suitable coding unit. Once I realized the appropriateness of altering the lyrics, I made the decision to alter the rest of the selected songs for the pilot. As for randomizing the psychosocial stage, I found the lyrics either fit the coding criteria or did not. It felt odd to code intimacy before identity, and furthermore was cumbersome to code one stage at a time whether it was in order or at random. I found that I was coding all three stages simultaneously as no advantage revealed itself in coding the psychosocial stage in order or at random. Furthermore, it felt unnatural to code one stage at a time and proved to be impossible as some lyrical phrases had multiple stages that needed to be coded. Researchers in previous studies (Stewart, Franz, & Layton, 1988; Peterson & Stewart, 1990) did not randomize the stage in which they coded; however, they did randomize the order in which they coded the journal entries based on the date in which it was written. It seemed appropriate to randomize the order in which I code the 70 songs for the principal study. Therefore, the following decisions were made for the remainder of the pilot:

I. Each song will be listened to and the lyrics altered to match the musical phrasing as that allowed for a more appropriate codable image.

II. Coding will follow its natural course as coding one stage at a time, whether in order, or at random, proved to be unnecessary and unwieldy.

III. The order in which songs are coded will be randomized.

Since I refined the coding procedure for the pilot study, it seemed to be an appropriate time to

train and implement a second coder. Therefore, I trained the second coder by first discussing the importance of the lyrics matching the musical phrasing. I went through the protocol of gathering the lyrical data, listening to the song, and altering the written lyrics of the song to match the musical phrasing. Secondly, I reviewed the coding manual and highlighted the plus (certainty) and minus (uncertainty) system as well as how priority (specific psychosocial code if possible and then general) is operationalized. I also discussed what qualifies as a codable image and how to identify the meaningful words in the phrase. Lastly, I reviewed the coding software (NVivo) and provided a brief overview of how the software works. The coder understood the procedure and seemed comfortable with the process. We planned to code six Taylor Swift songs for the pilot study, and we decided to assess our observed agreement rating in three song blocks. By calculating our agreement in three song blocks, it also gave us an opportunity to discuss any coding discrepancies and adjust the process if necessary moving forward. If we had 80% agreement in structure and codable images for the six songs, we would proceed to coding the data in the principle study. If we did not, we would code one song at a time until we had the agreement we needed to proceed. The observed interrater agreement for the pilot study is listed below:

"Our Song" – 100%

"White Horse" – 90%

"Story of Us" – 97.50%

"The Lucky One" – 91.43%

"This Love" – 93.55%

"Gorgeous" – 80%

Our mean observed interrater agreement score for the pilot was 92.08%. I felt confident enough to move on to the John Mayer material as the agreement misses that we had during the pilot were minor (e.g. two to three images per song). The pilot allowed us to refine the coding process and discuss the ways in which each of us were approaching the material. For example, we realized that emotional language is often an indicator of an author's preoccupation with self and was usually codable. It is worth mentioning that "Gorgeous" proved to be the most demanding song to code. It was not only the longest in codable units, but several lines included identity and intimacy themes. Although we did not recognize it at the time, the coding results from "Gorgeous" ended up being one of the more interesting findings about the coding system in the pilot study. That is, intimacy images were often clear and easy to code, while it was more challenging to wade through identity and generativity themes. Most of the Taylor Swift songs we coded for the pilot study had a high frequency of intimacy images, while few identity images were coded, and no discernable generativity images were evident. Therefore, our observed agreement ratings were higher, because intimacy images are more distinct and simpler to code, and the Taylor Swift songs that we coded had greater levels of observed intimacy than the other two stages. We later came to realize Mayer's lyrics were more complex than Swift's as several stages and subcategories could appear in one of his songs, which contributed to lower overall interrater agreement in the principal study. Had I known how cumbersome the coding process would be for identity and generativity, I may have selected some additional songs for the pilot study to get a sense of the challenge ahead.