

Explaining Music Career in Greece: What are the Decisive Factors that Shape it?

Kalliopi Hatziminaoglou¹, Ioanna Papavassiliou-Alexiou² & Petros Vouvaris³

Abstract

This paper investigates the factors that influence career decision-making and the course of professional musicians in Greece. The role of family, friends/peers and music teachers is examined, as well as those aspects of personality, which are related with career choices and professional development. Data analysis of 20 semi-structured interviews led to the following conclusions: regarding the environmental factors, family, friends/peers and teachers seem to bear in an ongoing and multifaceted way upon facilitating or complicating the process of professional decision-making. The role of personality appears more crucial in the development towards a music career. An interesting corollary of the study is the conspicuous absence of career guidance and counseling services from external supporting influences. A planned and systematic provision for professional career guidance and counseling is recommended, as a means to offer a firm and informed support to graduate music students of both secondary and higher education in Greece.

Keywords: music career, career choices, career guidance, environmental factors, personality traits

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Introduction

Previous research in musical development has shown that biological correlations of skills and abilities, the way of practicing, and the accumulated amount of study hours are some of the critical factors that influence the level of expertise that musicians eventually reach (see, e.g., Burland, 2005; Schlaug, 2006; Werner, 2007). However, the changing career patterns that have emerged in the twenty-first century emphasize new attributes and skill sets, identified as metacapabilities for future career success (Bridstock, 2013). According to Weller (2012), the Commission for the Education of the Professional Musician (CEPROM) relates the notion of professional musician to “a wide range of topics, opportunities and challenges, training, and changing roles in various societies and cultures” (p.5). Career awareness is a logical requisite among emerging musicians, pertaining not only to technical skills, but also to interpersonal attributes, creativity, metacognitive career development, and transcultural understanding (Bennet, 2016; Rowley & Bennet, 2019). In Greece, most educational institutions and music conservatoires have taken up the task of contributing to the development of skills that relate to a wide array of professional choices such as performing, composing, and teaching, but they fall short of providing their graduates with strategies that could allow for an all-rounded music education, and aid in decision making and career management. As a result, students often lack knowledge of different working opportunities that relate to the music industry, such as music technology, music management, music journalism, or music research (De Leon & Castro, 2014). Numerous studies have focused on music perception and cognition, the intrinsic value of music education, and the potential benefits of music training during childhood (see, e.g., Jorgensen, 2001; Juslin & Sloboda, 2001; Manturzevska, 1990; Peretz & Zatorre, 2003). However, efforts to shed light on the dynamic interrelation between the individual and his/her environment, as pertaining to the way personal characteristics interact with his/her self-concept and determine his/her music career paths, have rarely been attempted. Given the limited scope of this body of research, the present article constitutes an attempt to study the subjective experience of Greek musicians’ career paths through qualitative research, aligned with the recommendation of grounded theory “questioning rather than measuring and using research participants as a source of knowledge”(Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p.6).

¹ Secondary Music School, Thessaloniki Greece, Piano teacher, MA in Lifelong Learning, University of Macedonia, School of Social Sciences, Humanities & Arts, Dept. of Educational and Social Policy, hatziminpo@gmail.com

² University of Macedonia, Associate Professor, Department of Educational and Social Policy, Thessaloniki Greece, ipapav@uom.edu.gr

³ University of Macedonia, Associate Professor, Department of Music Science & Art, Thessaloniki Greece, vouvaris@uom.gr

According to Dell Corso & Rehfuß (2011), “career theories move towards incorporating holistic approaches, narratives and career conceptualizations holistically create clarity in understanding what, how, and why individuals author their lives and careers” (p.334). Having as starting point the assumption that current career theory tries to understand, explain, and support career development through the combined effects of environmental and individual factors, we have formulated the following research questions: i) How do Greek professional musicians perceive the role of environmental factors (family, friends/peers, and teachers) in their career choices? ii) Which personality traits have influenced the career choices of Greek musicians?

2. Literature Review

2.1. *Music Career, Environmental and Personality Factors*

Most research literature regarding music career development is based on developmental aspects of musicians’ lifespan. Considering that professional development theories are presented as a combination of environmental and psychological factors (Amundson, Mills & Smith, 2014), the present study draws from the domain of developmental/social psychology, for its theoretical framework. This is considered an appropriate choice given that the study focuses on the importance of socio-environmental influences during childhood, as well as on the critical periods of the individuals’ life-span that mark changes in career choices. On these grounds, Hargreaves (1996), based on Piaget’s theory distinguishes five phases of musical development: the sensory motor phase, the figural phase, the schematic phase, the rule systems phase, and the professional phase. A variety of music researchers have made similar claims about musicians’ professional development and career paths based on theories of lifespan transitions connected with age stages (see, e.g., Ericsson, Krampe, & Romer, 1993; Hargreaves, 1996; Sosniak, 1990). Bloom (1985) distinguished three stages in the course of which musicians develop personal ways of working towards an exclusive engagement with music. Mantutzewska (1990) proposed six periods in the life-span development of a professional musician emphasizing the need for support by parents and teachers. Ericsson et al., (1993) described the “whole life” of a musician, referring to the innovation and professional recognition that mark the period before the retirement. Howe, Davidson and Sloboda (1998) underlined the profound effect of personal characteristics such as relevant prior knowledge and skill, self-confidence, optimism, and motivation. Moreover, Gembris and Davidson (2002) recognized three key genetic factors as important innate components for the development of musical ability: (i) physical capacity (ii) maturational development, and (iii) mental capacity.

However, musicians need to acquire more than performance and technical skills during their musical development, in order to establish and sustain a career in music. Among the various attributes that have been proposed facilitating factors for development of career awareness, are disciplinary agility, social networking capability, creative enterprise, and career self-management (Bridstock & Hearn 2012). As twenty-first-century has brought social, cultural and technological developments in musical industry as well, career choices have become more challenging than ever before. Musicians need to possess diverse skill sets, and navigate new contexts in order to build sustainable music careers (Bartleet et al., 2012).

2.1.1. Family. Several studies suggest that parents of high-achieving students are significantly more involved in their children’s music education than parents of low-achieving ones (Davidson et al., 1996; O’ Neill, 1997). The development of verbal interactions and joint activities between parent and child, combined with musical instruments at home, contribute decisively to the successful acquisition of musical skills in early childhood (Gembris & Davidson, 2002). Relevant research indicates that, although significant types of parental support may enhance musical learning (Sloboda & Howe, 1991), in some cases, there is no correlation between parental involvement and students’ enjoyment or achievement (Mc Millan, 2004). Stollery & Mc Phee (2002) have stressed that “motivation through praise and enhancement of self-esteem were two of the most important factors for the development of engagement in music for future teachers and music psychologists” (p. 93). However, Freeman (1991, as cited in Burland, 2008) suggests that emotional pressure to succeed may subdue children’s personality and cause feelings of anxiety.

2.1.2. Friends/peers. Apart from parents, older siblings may act as role-models having a lifelong influence on children’s motivation to listen and make music (Seifert & Hoffnung, 1994). Stimulation of being with other people of similar ability is also a factor that shapes values and attitudes of young musicians, and motivates them to engage in music making and performance (Hall, 2005; Sichivitsa, 2007). Particularly creative for the musical development of children with special skills is considered to be the attendance of Music Schools, given that the interactions with peers provides children with opportunities to develop common musical interests (Sosniak, 1990).

2.1.3. Teachers. Several studies have highlighted the key-role of music teachers in skill acquisition as well as in student's personality development as a whole. According to Gembris & Davidson (2002), "teachers transmit musical abilities, influence musical tastes and values, and act as role models with regard to motivation for good or for bad" (p. 23). Music specialists and educationalists concur that a gifted teacher is one of the most important factors that have influenced their career (Stollery & Mc Phee, 2002) and it is the approach of the teacher, who designs practice activities that may maximize motivation and improvement (Lepper & Woolverton, 2002). Investigating the effect that music teachers' verbal and non-verbal communication had on students, Whitaker (2011) has found that "students had a respect for their director's musical abilities and knowledge regardless of rapport, desired more praise, and thought of disapproving feedback as necessary critique" (p. 290). Mc Loed and Napoles (2012) have examined several independent variables to detect perceptions that predict teachers' effectiveness, and have found that teachers' delivery, positive demeanor, appropriate feedback and subject matter competence were the most important factors to determine their efficiency.

2.1.4. Personality Traits. For the development of virtuoso professional musicians, personality studies demonstrate a detailed understanding of personality traits such as high ability of concentration, openness, determination, and the need for free thinking and action (Kemp & Mills, 2002). Research referring to career transitions has put emphasis on self-efficacy beliefs in career goals and the individuals' success in achieving them (see, e.g., Solberg et al. 1998). Mac Namara et al., (2008) highlighted the role of dedication, determination, adaptability, realistic performance evaluations, time management and social skills. Abbot and Collins (2002) identified significant behavioral strategies that facilitate the development of musical potential and suggested a range of common elements, such as self-regulation, and goal setting.

3. Method

The present study adopts a qualitative methodological outlook. Unlike quantitative research which primarily deals with numerical data, qualitative research is preferred on the basis of its potential to allow a thick description of "underexplored phenomena being studied in a certain population" (Leung, 2015, p.324). Along these lines, the grounded theory method was adopted in order to address our research concerns, "look for perspectives that were left out and assumptions that need to be challenged" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003, p.15). The present study aims at drawing in- depth insight into the subjective experiences of Greek musicians' career paths from their own testimonies.

3.1. Participants

We collected data from a sample of 20 musicians (N=20, 12 male, 8 female) aged between 23–57 years. Participants were purposefully sampled on the basis of their profound music teaching and professional profile, regarded as highly competent. The participants were: members of the Thessaloniki State Orchestra, piano, violin, viola, cello, and percussion teachers, piano accompanists of instrumentalists and vocalists and music theory teachers. All participants had had active performance careers and considerable teaching experience in Primary, Secondary, and Tertiary Music Education. Three of the participants specialized in folk, popular, and Byzantine music (one in each genre). A band director was also included in the sample of participants.

3.2. Research Tool and Procedures

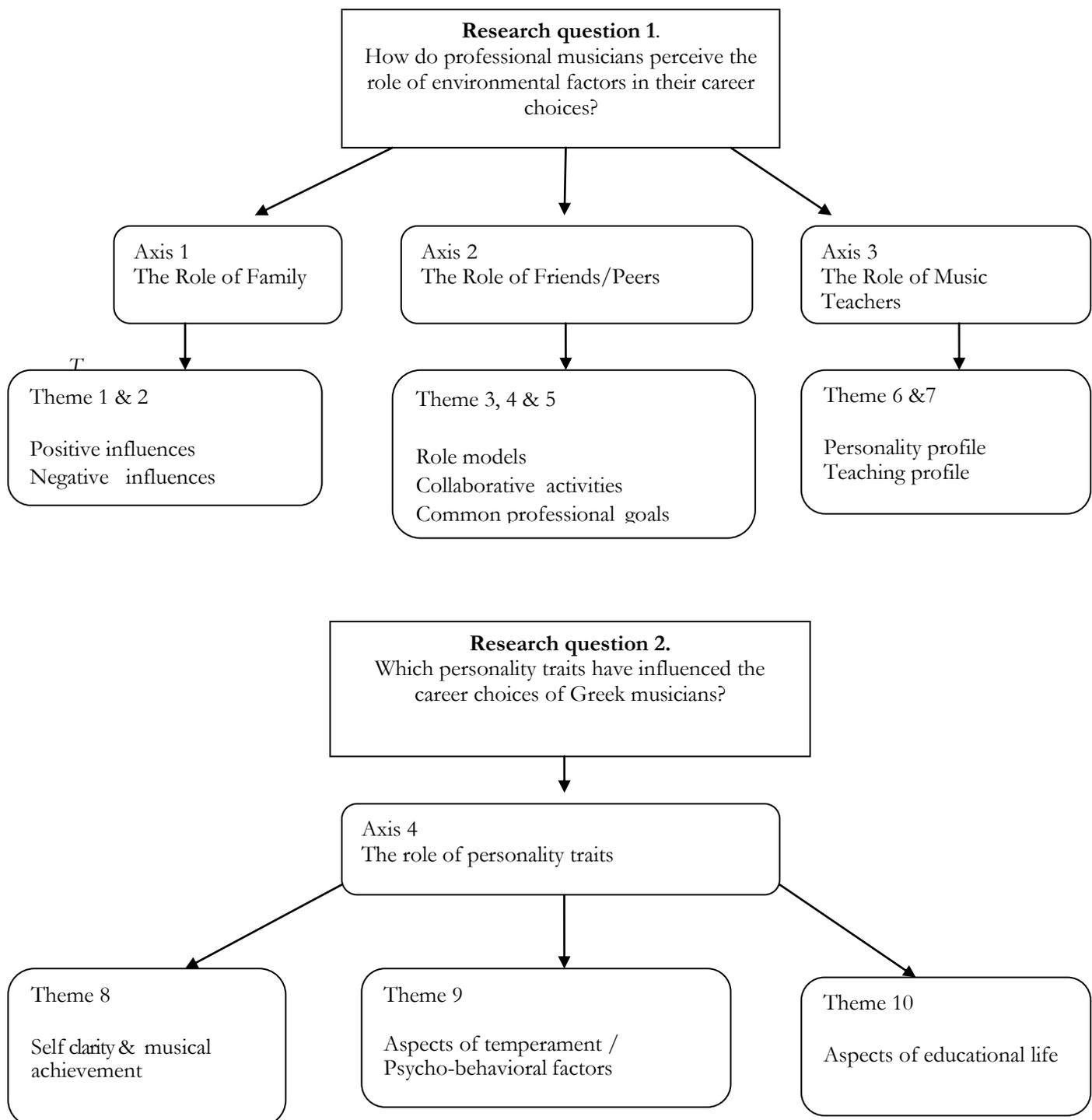
In our attempt to cover personal issues over a broad life span through open-ended questions, semi-structured interviews was judged to be the appropriate tool for the collection of data. The plan we followed included preparation of the interview protocol, face-to-face, telephone, and e-mail invitations to potential participants, and determination of the place and time of the interviews. Anonymity and confidentiality were assured. A pilot study provided valuable information about the structure of the interview, as well as further details about ethical aspects (Cohen et al., 2008). Twenty interviews took place, each lasting between 30 and 60 minutes. The interview guide included questions about the musical background of the participants' family, parental and teachers' support, music teachers' personality and teaching profile, as well as individual skills and personality characteristics associated with the participants' musical identity. To ensure reliability, transparency and internal coherence was reinforced throughout the analysis process, allowing for theoretical coding to be thoroughly reviewed. Transcripts of the interviews were presented to the participants in order to get their feedback, as a means to ensure the refinement and clarification of the emerging information (Silverstein et al., 2006).

3.3. Data Analysis

Grounded Theory Coding, after Auerbach and Silverstein (2003), was the technique adopted for transcript analysis, in order to provide theoretical narrative that "bridge the gap between research concern and raw data" (p.41). Following the grounded theory method, theoretical constructs derived from and were grounded in the participants own understanding, moving in small steps, each building on the previous one (Charmaz, 2006).

This is a filtering process in which the researchers both systematically and carefully highlighted the relevant text, and grouped the related passages of research concerns into repeating, common ideas that were then organized into coherent themes, constructing theoretical narratives consistent with our theoretical framework. Coding process was not a linear progression, but was considered as a highly reliant method which the researchers formulated through continuous comparing and contrasting, reaching a high agreement consensus level of 90%. For the purposes of the research, unrelated codes were discarded and, 481 Simple Ideas were identified and organized into 91 Repeating Ideas, which were then categorized into 10 Themes. These themes were formulated into 4 Axes (Theoretical constructs): 1) the role of family, 2) the role of friends/peers, 3) the role of music teachers, and 4) the role of personality traits. The above correspond directly to our two research questions (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
Research Questions



4. Results

Axis 1: The role of Family

Both classical and non-classical musicians reported an early parent-child musical interaction, offering opportunities for every-day musical experiences, such as singing, playing, or listening to music: “My professional involvement with music came as a natural consequence of what I saw happening in the family” (M12)⁴. It seems that the way each participant was introduced to a particular area of music study was due to the interest of at least one parent. In one particular case, a participant’s mother became actively involved with her child’s early music lessons, hence, she had a considerable contribution to the child’s musical development: “Yes ... her madness, she actually wanted music, I did not ask for it, but she was told that I might have skills in sports or music, so she insisted” (M02). Another factor of considerable importance was the children’s positive outlook on their acquisition of musical skill at first, followed by supportive attitudes towards transitioning into the music profession: “My father said that I should be prepared for Music Studies, go to the University, because this was my destiny” (M20); “After my Primary Education my mother decided that I should attend the Music High-School in Thessaloniki and this was the turn for me” (M11). Participants described high levels of parental commitment regarding the economic cost of music lessons, verbal encouragement, and supportive home environment: “They were convinced that we had to find money, my grandfather helped, we got it in installments” (M06). Those aspects appeared to be crucial in motivating musicians of young age and, thus, had a lifelong impact. Regarding negative parental influences, more than half of the respondents reported negative parental feelings and perceptions about their pursuit of a career in music in comparison to more “prestigious” professions. This led the majority of the participants to pursue additional studies in Tertiary Education, unrelated to music: “Make sure you have a university degree and keep music just for fun” (M12). Furthermore, biases appeared between gender and occupation: “My father, oh, he had other expectations for his son, but for me, I was the daughter, this made all the difference” (M06).

Axis 2: The Role of Friends/Peers.

Peers were particularly influential during the adolescence in various forms of interactions, mostly through collaborative activities that enhanced musical learning: “Discussions were held with fellow students, who were close friends, as well as activities such as reading, exchanging scores, discussions about performances and music-theory books” (M01). Like-minded friends created a positive environment in terms of common interests and developing a sense of “musical self”. Sometimes, they acted as role models and motivated each other towards common professional goals: “We used to imagine what our life later would be as professional musicians” (M14). The sub-culture of peer-groups seemed to work as a source of knowledge gain and job attainment: “We made a small band in the beginning, we played a couple of occasional gigs, and did not have conflicts, we were friends and we had fun while earning money” (M18). In the current study, no negative influences from peer groups were acknowledged; on the contrary, peer relationships were described in terms of useful musical interactions.

Axis 3: The Role of Music Teachers.

Teachers seemed to have played a critical role in terms of their dual motivating influence: through their personality and through their instruction profile. In most cases, a special kind of interpersonal teacher-student relationship was reported. At the initial period of musical training, participants focused on memories of warm and friendly teachers: “My first music teacher was beloved” (M08); “My music teacher inspired me to become a musician” (M05). The perceptions changed at the level of higher education, where musicians made a distinction between personality and professional characteristics of their teachers. They emphasized strict professional qualities of instrumental teachers, combined with a performer profile: “He is one of the top pianists of all time, but his pedagogical methods were competitive, cruel, and heartless” (M04).

Another aspect on which many participants focused pertained to the teachers’ communicative skills, stressing that “it is not only important what you say, but also how you say it” (M11). For example, it was highlighted that it is important for the teacher to keep her/his comments and instructions simple in order to be convincing. Successful musicians perceived their relationship with their teachers as close and personal, underscoring in particular, the support through guidance as the most determining factor for sustained learning and for fueling the students’ aspirations for a professional career in music: “My teacher urged me to get back to viola – instead of violin– and I’m grateful for that” (M08) (see Table 1).

⁴ The twenty interviewees were coded as M01 to M20 (M standing for “Musician”)

Table 1
Environmental Factors

Family, peers & friends	Teacher's influences
Supportive parents, emphasis on music education	Warm & friendly personality
Positive attitudes towards music career decisions	Strict, patient, caring, reliable
Musically fertile home environment	Empathetic, respectful to adult music students, culturally responsive
Emotional & practical support	Inspiring role models
Occupation & biases: gender, financial constraints and social status	High levels of domain-specific knowledge and skill
Common career aspirations among peers	Effectiveness, clarity of verbal and non-verbal communication
	Flexible to student's learning profiles and educational needs
	Initiatives in complementary educational and vocational guidance

Additionally, inspiration to attain professional competency was acknowledged to have been given by teachers, who were looked up to and respected for their musical expertise: "My musical standards were of very high quality; my teacher was a member of the Alban Berg quartet" (M09). The importance of the teacher's empathy was also mentioned, regarding instructional practice in different cultures: "In Greece, a good but temperamental teacher may start shouting at you, which would be unacceptable in Thailand" (M11). Furthermore, inventive and playful instructional methods combined with commitment, patience, reliability, and honesty were associated with a caring teacher profile: "His words were valuable, a person you can trust" (M16)

Axis 4: The role of personality traits.

Participants initially emphasized their cognitive and artistic capabilities that developed in correspondence with their psychological development along the course of their musical development. They pointed out the significance of musicality, innate abilities, and talent when playing an instrument, singing, or composing: "There is a spectral quantity of talent that someone has, quick thinking in various levels, actually. In any case, you have to be talented" (M04). Additionally, the love for music was the starting point that stimulated future behaviors and formed career decisions: "Above all, never lose this joy, to grab the violin and say: I play music because I love it" (M11); "I think that those who do their job as a hobby, they are happy in life" (M18). A range of personal skills and behaviors seemed to encourage musicians to expand their expertise into various professional settings (Table 3/ supplemental online material). Patience, determination, perseverance, and hard and disciplined work received considerable attention: "If you have the necessary skills, you can achieve excellence through intense effort and deliberate practice" (M15). Dedication and time management were required, while mental strength and willingness to make sacrifices was considered to be a key factor for progress. Flexibility and self-regulatory skills, such as managing anxiety and coping with rejection, were seen by many as abilities to accustom themselves in various educational settings: "Once someone lost in a contest or was excluded, one had obviously to struggle, but afterwards, seeing it from a different perspective, it was simply an experience" (M10).

Attributes that were identified by the participants as important for shaping their paths towards a music career were perfectionism, self-belief, ambition, assertiveness, leadership skills, as well as ability for realistic personal evaluation: "I think it's a kind of personal madness, to strive for challenge, to say that this is something I want to be good at" (M10); yet, "one must keep their feet down on earth" (M15). Several musicians said that they had always been setting goals and feeling challenged to try new things in order to be professionally active and creative: "I'm moving forward" (M05); "I feel forced to be in a constant hustle, improve myself" (M07). A combination of openness and appropriate social skills was also mentioned: "It is important to collaborate, learn how to listen" (M16) (see Table 2).

Aspects of the educational process were also described in relation to the formation of musical identities. For example, familiarity with performance activities from a very early age was highlighted: “As a choir-performer, I had my first concert when I was six” (M05). On the other hand, development of musical abilities in adulthood with no previous influences was mentioned: “When I was 21 years old I started piano lessons without having any previous background, the results were excellent; I had an unexpected progress” (M19).

Table 2

Personality Traits

Internal factors	Skills/Educational profile
Self clarity & musical achievement	Effective learning Interest in a specific musical domain (e.g. playing an instrument, singing, composing, sight reading, conducting and aural skills) Dedication: constant practice and goal setting
Aspects of temperament/psycho-behavioral factors	Ambition, perfectionism Patience, perseverance, self confidence Openness, cooperation skills Coping strategies, flexibility, self-regulatory skills
Aspects of educational life	Early childhood music education, commitment Career decisions from adolescence Lifelong learners

An interesting aspect of the problems encountered by aspiring musicians was the total absence of counseling services dealing with career related issues and employment: “I was not sure I wanted to become a professional performer, a soloist...I did not have any guidance” (M04). On the other hand, crystallizing educational experiences formed a frame of reference regarding professional goals: “The greatest experience was the World Youth Orchestra” (M02); “When I left Greece, I had already had some music education, but it was during my music studies abroad that I became a musician” (M15); “There were some disappointments during my educational and professional life, but finally, a music teacher or a person encouraged me and had a key-role in my professional development; I do the same thing with my students now and I keep contact with people that still supports me” (M13). Finally, the need to cope with financial issues throughout the adult life was mentioned: “I played temporarily at the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in order to earn a living” (M09) (see Appendix, Table 2)

5. Discussion

Through the employment of a qualitative method and the use of narratives, our study encouraged participants to reflect on their career choices and realize whether a career in music was the right choice for them or not. Besides the environmental and personality factors, no music education program has helped musicians in Greece to pursue a music career. Although personality characteristics do not diminish the role of social factors, it is essential to acknowledge the critical role of the former to the career paths of musicians.

With respect to the role of the family, our study confirms the conclusion of previous studies that although it is one of the most profound factors in the acquisition of musical skills in childhood, it is not by itself the decisive factor for the further development of music students (Gembris & Davidson, 2002). This was evident in several cases of our study; in as much, some of the participants had parents with no musical knowledge, while others testified that they were not crucially influenced with regard to their ultimate career choices by the negative parental perceptions about music as an occupational choice. Moreover, unlike the findings of Davidson et al., (1996) our findings suggest that musicians who acquired musical skills successfully were not always likely to experience high levels of parental support. On the other hand, gender and other cultural factors strongly affected the career choices of Greek musicians: there is a strong tendency for girls to be expected to become teachers, and for boys to count on occupations that offer a strong financial and social status.

A high sense of self-confidence and long-term intrinsic motivation were the ingredients that served as protective factors for the career choices of the participants, promoted resilience, and reduced negative influences regarding financial constraints. Although parental aspirations have been deemed as very influential with respect to the formation of career choices (Irwin & Elley, 2012), our study showed that continuous practice, love of music, and coping strategies helped the participants to overcome setbacks, such as the obligation to please their parents, instead of seeking alternative careers.

As far as friends/peers influence is concerned, our results confirmed that those groups are influential during adolescence with respect to motivation and engagement in music making and performance. In consensus to previous research, our study has shown that peers offer social support, promote self-esteem, and, in some cases, have a more considerable influence on behavior than parents or teachers do. Moreover, our findings confirm that, within a formal educational setting – e.g. a Music High School – interactions with peers enhance motivation and commitment. Having similar interests and skills enables the faster progress of students and reinforces educational and professional expectations. Furthermore, our results show that peer groups have helped their members towards the development of their musical identities, participating in common activities, expressing opinions and music preferences, and, inspiring each other to higher levels of performance. Nevertheless this influence has taken place only within certain developmental stages, i.e. until the end of adolescence.

Music teachers constitute a highly important factor, mainly due to the intellectual stimulation and emotional support they provide. Previous studies have shown that teachers not only help students develop their musical personalities, but also affect professional decisions (see, e.g., Bouij, 1998; Gembris & Davidson, 2002; Krambe & Ericsson, 1995). An important result of our research pertains to the influence of a positive teacher-student interpersonal interaction. Most participants perceived their first music teachers as friendly and supportive, while, in higher music education, they focus on the importance of teacher expertise (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1995; O'Neill's, 1997). Furthermore, it seems to have been the guiding role of teachers that has functioned as part of the transition vehicle into the participants' professional life. On the other hand, music teachers were sometimes regarded as having a deterring role, discouraging or showing low communication skills and lack of empathy in their interpersonal teaching interactions.

The assessment of the role of personality traits in career decision-making through qualitative means is a challenging task. It would be difficult to hierarchize certain personality traits over others during the transitional phase of training to enter a music profession. Our research shows that it is the ability of each individual to activate effectively his/her entire social, emotional, and musical potential that helps him/her attain proficiency in the development of musical skills. Our results demonstrate that participants started shaping an idea of their musical interests during adolescence, the same time during which they gradually strengthened their self-efficacy and refined their future career goals. Furthermore, the awareness of their musical abilities was constantly mentioned as one of the critical determinants of the course of their further musical development. In the critical stage of making career decisions, it was the participants' musical potential over the role of environmental influences that seemed to be the prevailing factor in the career decision-making process. Surprisingly, financial rewards were not identified as of importance for the participants' professional choices. Apart from self-efficacy and the need for a considerable investment of time and effort during practice, the participants placed emphasis on chance and luck as important elements of their success. Occasional circumstances such as the decisions to study at Thessaloniki's Music High School, were also described as turning points. In most interviews, emphasis was given to professional contacts as encouraging continuous progress.

According to the present study a lack of specific music career guidance services was identified in the Greek music education context. As music teachers were found to act as well as important supporters and mentors for their students, their tight cooperation with career counsellors may be a necessary condition for any kind of guidance provision to prove effective. Research findings have raised a need for a new collaborative format that might help students towards a model of musical identity, transmitting career specific skills and knowledge.

6. Implications for Music Teachers and Career Counselors

The present study has attempted to bring to the fore the impact of environmental and personality factors on the career choices of aspiring music professionals in Greece according to their own testimonies. It is worth noting that what is conspicuously absent from these testimonies is the reference to any kind of organized career guidance program. In fact, the provision for any such program seems to be eschewed from the executive goals of any public or private institution of formal music education in Greece.

In this direction our study, evinces the need for targeted career-guidance programs to be developed and implemented in various contexts as a means to inform and guide sufficiently the career-development needs of children showing interest in music, as well as of music students and professional musicians.

Given the fact that children, in Greece as well as abroad, usually start their music education at an average age of 6–7 years old (Steele et al., 2013), it is firstly the parents that need advice and information either from guidance counselors or appropriately trained music teachers. Such a support could prevent parents from expressing a negative stance towards the prospect of their children pursuing a professional career in music,—as our study has demonstrated. Furthermore, it would encourage to acknowledge in the first place the need for them to undertake the role of effectively supporting their children in their first steps as they get invested in music.

Beyond the guiding role of the parents, in as much as the present study has confirmed the multivalent role of music teachers in shaping the professional ambitions of aspiring musicians, career counseling should become an important component of the music teachers' education and training. This will help then realize the impact they have on the career choices of their students beyond the scope of their roles as transmitters of musical skills and knowledge, and embrace this role in the most effective way.

Finally, as pertaining to the aspiring music professionals themselves, career education courses in secondary music schools should be targeted and tailored to the students' career-development needs, such as the cultivation and enhancement of their self-efficacy in musical performance, their career decision making, their communication, as well as other necessary career management skills. Apart from such school courses, the possibility of individual or small-group counseling meetings with a teacher/counselor specializing in music-career development may also be proved to be beneficial. A holistic approach combined with narratives would be the appropriate methodology for the multidimensional potential of future musicians to be unfolded and developed within the counseling sessions. Similar career services should be provided by tertiary educational institutions as well, such as music colleges or universities offering studies in music. At this level, the development of career resilience skills and support for the transition to the labor market should also be included according to the context. What is more, irrespectively of the level of the students' educational involvement in music, the benefits of effective and accredited career counseling cannot but spill over to the realm of peer interaction, where the students' attitudes and initiatives pertaining to career development are in part negotiated.

7. Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations that pertain to the nature of qualitative research. In our study, data were purposefully obtained from a sample of 20 participants and were limited to the area of Thessaloniki. As any qualitative research, our study may have gained insight to the participants' individual experiences, but it does not claim to generalize the findings with respect to the factors that inform the shaping of the career paths of all musicians.

There are clear trends in our data that seem to be consistent with recent music research findings that describe “the lack of information on the professional sector” as a common claim (De Leon & Castro, 2014, p.2050). As more new skills are required from the aspiring musicians, new challenges and questions appear for Greek musicians, on how they could respond to new professional needs. Consistent with this view, further qualitative and quantitative research is needed for the investigation not only of the individual and environmental aspects that affect the formation of musicians' career paths, but also, of the novel challenges aspiring musicians will have to meet in the brave new world.

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