

WORKING ON A DREAM

CAREERS OF POP MUSICIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS

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To my grandmother,
Dymph Zwaan-van der Maeden,

**WORKING ON A DREAM
CAREERS OF POP MUSICIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS**

Werken aan een droom
Carrières van popmuzikanten in Nederland
(met een samenvatting in het Nederlands)

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

One morning while riding the bus to work, I was reading an article in the newspaper about the 'next best thing' from England: an indie rock band called 'the Zutons' from Liverpool. A friend had given me their album 'Tired of Hanging Around', which I liked, and I thought their style was striking because it featured a saxophone, which is not very common in indie rock music. It seemed to me that this band had a good chance to become successful in the Netherlands. On the same page was an article about the well-established Irish rock band U2. While I was reading, there was a guy standing next to me with long hair, dressed in black clothes and wearing a long black leather trench coat. He was playing air guitar to the metal music that was playing on his headphones at a rather loud volume. From his natural and precise movements, I reckoned that he was a guitar player himself; I guessed that he was in a metal band. I found myself confronted with three examples of pop musicians at rather different stages in their musical careers, and this situation occurred to me as illustrative to the subject that I was dealing with in my research for this dissertation. Would these four guys and one girl from Liverpool become a mainstream hit, as their music obviously had hit potential? How did those four Irish boys manage to become world-famous and maintain their superstar-status for so long? And, would this 'metalhead' playing the air guitar ever have a chance of becoming a professional musician and playing his real guitar on the main stage of a (metal) music festival?

This scene happened in 2006, during that year the Zutons received a reasonable amount of airplay on the national radio station 3FM and performed at the prominent Paradiso venue in Amsterdam as well as at the main music festival Pinkpop . However, this did not bring them a major breakthrough in the Netherlands. Ironically, two years later, a cover version of their song 'Valerie' by Mark Ronson and Amy Winehouse became a number one hit in the Netherlands and many other countries.

In 2006, U2 celebrated their 30th anniversary and released a compilation album featuring 16 worldwide hit singles. Thirty years before, in 1976, they had started as a high school band, and back then, most of them could barely play an instrument. In 1978, after some band name and line up changes, they won a talent show giving them the financial means to record their first demo. It was through this demo that they were introduced to their manager Paul McGuinness who helped the band achieve some status and score their first hit in Ireland. Eventually their breakthrough came with their debut album 'Boy' in 1980. Since then, they have had 26 top ten hits in the Netherlands, sold millions of albums worldwide, received 22 Grammy awards, and were inducted in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

As for the guy in the black leather trench coat, I have no idea whether 2006 brought him anything in terms of his musical career. What I do know is that there are numerous people like him, people with a strong emotional bond with music; for whom making music is an important part of their identity. Most of them dream to one day become a famous musician, but only a few will ever succeed in establishing an actual career as a professional musician. In this dissertation, I focus on the question of what background, personality and contextual factors have an influence on the career development of musicians.

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Before discussing my own findings, I first discuss the concepts central to this dissertation that are in need of further elaboration, these include 'musician', 'career' and 'career success'. Through discussing these concepts and the related distinction between 'professional' and 'amateur', I also introduce several studies and theories that are related to the empirical research in this dissertation.

We are a musical species

What the three examples of musicians mentioned above have in common is that they are all part of the contemporary Western popular music tradition. However, musical traditions are found across all cultures, and since music making is also present in all periods of recorded history, we can call it a truly universal human activity. Furthermore, music is inextricably connected to speech, and several evolutionary theories hypothesize that both music and speech share a common ancestor (Brown, 2000; Molino, 2000; Richman, 2000), although some see music as a by-product of speech (e.g., Pinker, 1999). Different functions have been ascribed to the evolutionary development of music. Some see music as a mechanism for social bonding, beneficial for both group cohesion as well as parent-child bonding (Cross, 2001; Freeman, 2000; Trehub & Trainor, 1998). Others, based on Charles Darwin's ideas of sexual selection, see music as a more or less unconscious courtship display to attract sexual mates (Miller, 2000). Despite these plausible hypotheses from evolutionary theory, there is still relatively little known for certain about why we enjoy music. However, we do know that the human brain is equipped to process music and that every person is able to understand and make music (Huron, 2008; Mondialogo, 2005; Patel, 2008; ter Bogt, 2008). A recent experimental study showed that even newborn infants are already 'hardwired' to detect beat in rhythmic sound sequences (Winkler, Háden, Ladinig, Szillere, & Honing, 2009).

Thus, all humans are able to understand and enjoy music, and likewise, at least in principle, every person is able to make music. As a matter of fact, we do so already when we clap to music or hum to a song we hear on the radio. However, most people would not consider themselves to be musicians. In this study, I focus on a group of people that do, for this group, music is an important part of their identity. Their reasons for making music can be divided into two main categories.

First and foremost, making music is an intrinsic activity, that is, people engage in it because it brings them internal rewards. In general, the most important reason for making music is the same as for listening to music: simply because it gives us pleasure (Christenson & Roberts, 1998). A recent study among amateur pop musicians in the Netherlands shows that the most important reasons for making music are indeed based on intrinsic rewards. Making music provides fun, creativity, enjoyment, energy, satisfaction and happiness (van Bork, 2008). In her ethnographic analysis of musicians in the Liverpool rock scene in the 1980s, Sara Cohen finds similar motives among her respondents: most of the musicians she studied were in bands because of the social and cultural reasons such as having fun with friends and as an outlet for creativity (Cohen, 1991, p. 3).

Second, musicians can be driven by external rewards as reasons for their music making. These external rewards can include social rewards such as recognition, appraisal and admiration but also material and financial rewards. Making music as a public activity can bring

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recognition from peers, appraisal from critics and admiration from audience members. Furthermore, some musicians are able to earn money with their musical activities, for example through performing or selling recordings. In addition to being an intrinsic activity, music making then becomes an extrinsic activity. I would argue that both the internal and external reasons for making music form the basis for music making as a profession. However, as is the case in most creative professions, many aspire to become professional musicians, but very few actually succeed.

The chances of becoming a successful musician have been nicely summarized by Mike Jones in his dissertation about the success and failure of pop acts: “Anybody’ can pick up a guitar but not everybody can make a record of the sounds they make with that guitar; and far fewer can hope that the record they make will become a ‘hit’, a popular success” (Jones, 1998, p.11). Jones also states that it is not the quality of the music itself that separates success from failure in the music industry but rather how effectively the music and its makers are turned into commodities and how well this commodity is sold (Jones, 1998). Obviously, once music making transforms from being a private activity into the public endeavour of selling music as a commodity, other parties become involved and have a share in its failure or success.

It is precisely this distinction between failure and success that I am interested in. More specifically, within this dissertation I seek to find out why a musician’s career can become a failure or a success. The central research question is:

RQ: What are the determinants of career success for Dutch pop musicians?

Before discussing the several possible meanings of success, I first elaborate on the definition of ‘musician’ and discuss some of the practical difficulties of the seemingly unambiguous distinction between amateur and professional music making.

Musicians: amateurs, professionals, semi-professionals or pro-ams?

First, the term musician itself is in need of further explanation. Common knowledge prescribes that a musician is simply ‘someone who makes music’, but such a simple definition does not do justice to the different aspects of being a musician. Roy Shuker (2001) provides a more precise definition of the different aspects that music making entails: “the initial creation of musical texts, through songwriting and the ‘working up’ of a composition, either original or a ‘cover’, for performance/recording”, and in addition “the reproduction of the musical text as a material product—the sound recording (...) and the various styles of reproduction as performance” (Shuker, 2001, p.100). Thus, the central activities of a musician include the creation of new musical texts, the adaptation of existing musical texts, and the performance and recording of musical texts. Such a broad definition leaves open a whole array of different kinds of musicians with varying degrees of professional status.

Before elaborating on this professional status, I have to take a little sidestep to shortly describe the type of musicians that I focus on in this dissertation. The most comprehensive and common way to categorize music, and by extension the musicians who make it, is through the usage of musical genres, such as ‘classical’, ‘jazz’, ‘soul’, ‘rock’, or ‘pop’. Within

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this dissertation, I focus on popular musicians, that is, those musicians involved in making popular music in some form or another. Having said that, I want to note that popular music is an umbrella term for a broad range of different subgenres and scenes, each with their own set of distinct rules and conventions leading to different opportunities for the musicians involved.

In trying to provide a general definition of 'Popular music' Shuker observes that "popular music defies [a] precise straightforward definition" (Shuker, 2005, p. 203). He continues by discussing three different solutions to this problem, each with inherent difficulties: 1) definitions that focus on the 'popular', simply defining popular music as music that is popular; 2) definition that focus on its commercial nature, defining popular music as music that is commercially oriented; and 3) definitions that focus on general musical and non-musical characteristics, such as musicological aspects or the way that music is produced and distributed. Shuker concludes by stating that a satisfactory definition of popular music should include both musical as well as socio-economic characteristics and that "all popular music consists of a hybrid of musical traditions, styles and influences, and is also an economic product which is invested with ideological significance by many of its consumers" (Shuker, 2005, p. 205).

It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to come to a final definition, if such a thing is possible at all. But for the sake of clarity, I want to note that in this dissertation I follow the broad definition given by Toynbee who defines popular music by distinguishing it from 'Folk music' and 'Classic music'. Folk music is the kind of music that flourished in the pre-industrial era and often has a ritual function. Furthermore, it was reproduced through an oral tradition of repeated performance, so without any form of commodification or use of media technology. Classical music can best be described as the art music of the Western middle and upper classes. Its main characteristics are the strong division of labour between composition and performance, and its main repertoire can be situated between 1750 and 1950. Popular music then is historically connected to the mass media, as it is both created within and disseminated through the mass media. Moreover, within popular music the composer is often the same person as the performer (for a full discussion of this tripartite distinction see: Toynbee, 2000, pp. xviii–xix).

The definition of popular music offered by Toynbee includes both musical as well as socio-economic characteristics and is in line with Frith's remark that pop music "is as much defined by what it is, as by what it is not" (Frith, 2001a, p. 95). In an earlier piece of writing drawing on Becker and Bourdieu, Frith makes a similar distinction between the three discourses of "bourgeois, folk, and commercial music worlds, of high art, folk art, and pop art" (Frith, 1996, pp.35–43). For the musicians discussed in this dissertation, the consequence of this definition is that these musicians are mainly identifiable by the fact that they are neither classical musicians nor folk musicians. As such, being a popular musician comes with its own status within the broader population of musicians. This also brings me back to the matter of professional status.

As Ruth Finnegan illustrates, the term professional seems, at first, unambiguous: "A 'professional' musician earns his or her living by working full time in some musical role, in contrast to the 'amateur', who does it 'for love' and whose source of livelihood lies elsewhere." (Finnegan, 1989, p. 13). She continues to explain that when trying to apply these

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descriptions to actual musicians, several ambiguities arise about the concept of 'earning one's living', about the concept of 'working in music' and about the emotional associations with the term 'professional'. She concludes that the amateur/professional distinction should rather be seen as a continuum with many different possible variations. Likewise, in discussing the popular music industry, Frith (2001b) notes that there is no clear-cut distinction between the amateur and the professional musician.

Indeed, in practice, some musicians receive financial rewards for playing gigs and selling recordings, but would still label themselves 'amateurs' because they have full-time non-musical day-jobs. However, in some cases, these 'amateur' musicians can receive substantially higher remunerations for playing gigs than other musicians who consider themselves 'professional musicians'. Having established that there is no clear distinction between amateur and professional music making, Finnegan explains how 'professional music' is dependent on 'local amateur music' as professional music needs the influx of talented amateur musicians. All 'professional' musicians regularly start through local non-professional opportunities, that is, as amateurs (Finnegan, 1989, p.17).

Although most scholars agree with this idea of a continuum, several authors have argued that there are criteria to distinguish professionals from amateurs (e.g., Frey & Pommerhne, 1989; Hutchison & Feist, 1991; Jeffri & Throsby, 1994; Wassall & Alper, 1985). Sari Karttunen gives a detailed overview of the different ways to identify *professional* artists. She concludes that such a definition is always a relative as well as a political matter and at some point any definition of whom to include remains arbitrary (Karttunen, 1998). This dissertation focuses on musicians aspiring to become professional musicians but when applying criteria such as main source of income, professional education or time spent on artistic work, most of them are usually still amateurs. For that reason I choose not to make a sharp distinction between amateurs or professionals within this dissertation. Instead, I compare the individual career achievements of the musicians, and I argue that they can all be placed somewhere along the amateur/professional continuum.

Such an amateur/professional continuum allows for the inclusion of variations such as the semi-professional, musicians who work on a professional level, but also have other jobs that provide part of their income, as well as the so-called professional amateurs, Pro-Ams, a concept coined by Charles Leadbeater and Paul Miller. These authors describe the blurring between the concepts of professional and amateur and depict the contemporary rise of amateurs within professions that were formerly the exclusive domain of professionals, especially since the rise of the Internet as a platform for audience participation (Leadbeater & Miller, 2004). In the case of popular music, history is full of self-taught and self-made musicians, as well as one hit wonders that have fallen from grace. I would argue that Pro-Ams have always been part of the pop music industry, and they continue to form a considerable segment of musicians active in the popular music field.

Some of the reasons why this is the case are noted by Jason Toynbee in his discussion of the status and practices of the musician within the contemporary music industry. He explains that the thresholds of becoming a musician are relatively low in terms of economic or cultural capital and, furthermore, little or no specialist training is required (Toynbee, 2000, p.26). He also points out that, contrary to 'high arts' such as fiction writing, the visual arts or photography, the professional status or 'consecration' is not clearly defined. The term conse-

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cration, introduced by Bourdieu (1993, 1996), is used to describe the process of becoming an established artist, as Toynbee points out, this is a dual process of “entering the market and being invested with artistic prestige” (Toynbee, 2000, p.26). In the case of the pop musician, there is no formal threshold or common rite of passage that signifies this process of consecration. Finally, an important reason for the low threshold of becoming a musician is the physical and economic availability of musical instruments and user-friendly technology to perform and record music.

However, this leaves open the question of how musicians change positions on this amateur/professional continuum, that is, how their careers in music making develop over time and what factors influence whether their endeavours are successful or not.

Careers in music

This brings me to a central concept in this study, that of the *career*. Different definitions of career all include the same central elements. These are 1) a notion of work and meanings attached to work, 2) a notion of time, as careers evolve over time, and 3) a notion of the relationships between individuals and the organizations and institutions that serve as the providers of work (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989a, p. 8-11). In this dissertation, I follow the definition offered by Judge, Cable, Boudreau & Bretz, (1995): ‘a career is the sequence of work-related positions (jobs) occupied throughout a person’s life.’ This way of defining careers comes from organizational psychology and was originally used to describe the hierarchic structure of large organizations.

Obviously, some aspects of the musician’s career are rather different from such professions. For example, the phase of career entry of a popular musician is rather different from most professions where jobs have formal, relatively objective selection procedures and clear-cut job requirements such as education or experience levels, for pop musicians this is clearly not the case. Furthermore, musicians often have to sign contracts, for example with pub owners, live venues, recording studios, music publishers or record companies, but these contracts do not resemble the kind of standard long-term full-time employment contract that an employee would sign with an employer. Rather, the musician is more like a skilled professional who is hired on a short-term basis for a very specific task. Keeping in mind these essential differences to other professions, the essence of the definition referred to above is also applicable to the musician’s career.

This point is acknowledged by Kanter (1989) in her typology of career types. She describes three different ideal types, that is, the bureaucratic career, the professional career and the entrepreneurial career. For each type of career she considers the way that individual careers progress, the nature of the career chances and the limitations of each career type. The bureaucratic career is most common in big corporations that have a clear hierarchy. Progress in this type of career is through advancement, that is, getting a job promotion resulting in a higher income and more status. In this career type, the career chances are equal to the chances of getting promoted. As a result, individuals who do not get promoted are ‘stuck’ to their place in the hierarchy.

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The second career type is that of the professional, where progress, chances and limitations are defined by skill, craft or knowledge. Examples are sportsmen, actors, but also dentists and academics. Here status is achieved through having skills or knowledge that is socially valued, and chances are based on individual reputation. Within this type of career, progress does not involve climbing the corporate ladder and changes in work tasks that are a result of the higher function. Rather, the chances of career progress are based on the growth of individual skills or knowledge resulting in the individual growth of reputation. This also brings the limitation that in certain professions there is a ceiling to the growth of skills and knowledge, for example the profession of the electrician.

The third career type that Kanter discusses is the entrepreneurial career. For this type of career, the chances of career progress are based on the possibility to create new value or new organizational capacity. In other words, the career of an entrepreneur progresses when his or her business grows and their company's market value increases. Although entrepreneurs indeed form one group of careers that follow this career logic, the name of this career type is slightly misleading, as there are other professions within organizations that follow the same logic, for example salesmen that work on a commission basis.

As Kanter admits, this typology is based on ideal types and most professions share characteristics of more than one type. I would argue that the profession of the musician is best described by the professional career as chances, and progress of a musician is initially determined by his or her musical skills. A musician's reputation is based on his or her achievements (e.g., performances, recordings), and this reputation can lead to bigger, more prestigious or better-paid assignments. At the same time, the musician's career also includes some elements of the entrepreneurial career as their artistic work is based on the creation of value.

Simon Frith (1988) discussed two different career models describing the kinds of careers that he observes within the popular music industry. He referred to these as 'The Rock', representing the traditional model of the rock music career, and 'The Talent Pool', representing a new kind of career that emerged through the 1980s rise of the new music video format in selling new pop groups and the commercialisation of the music industry. The first model, 'The Rock', he envisioned as a pyramid with a broad base representing the many musicians playing the local scenes, and as they work their way up through the regional and national levels, their numbers get smaller until the highest level, the small top of the pyramid, which represents the 'superstars' who enjoy international hits, tours and media exposure. The second model, 'The Talent Pool', is best described as a reservoir of musicians and other creative workers or intermediaries that the record industry can select from. As Frith himself puts it, the large multinational record companies "are 'fishing' for material, pulling ideas, sounds, styles, performers from the talent pool and dressing them up for world wide consumption" (Frith, 1988, p. 113).

Frith's description of the Talent Pool is similar to Miège's description of a reservoir of under-employed artists; a pool of creative workers who are ready for work, where the cultural industries can select from. According to Miège, the existence of this reservoir is the result of an oversupply of artists (Miège, 1989). This is a characteristic that most artistic labour markets have in common and is often referred to in studies (e.g., Abbing, 2002; Hesmondhalgh, 2007; Janssen, 2001; Menger, 2001; Towse, 1996). Menger adequately notes in

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his review on artistic labour markets: “The oversupply of artists has been underscored nearly as often as sociologists, economists, and historians have dealt with artistic labour markets. One could hardly find a piece of research where an excess supply of artists is not documented” (Menger, 1999, p. 566). Although this oversupply is not the focus of this study, I do want to point out that describing this oversupply in terms of a talent pool or a reservoir of workers that can be drawn from by cultural industries does paint a picture of musicians passively waiting to be chosen. Obviously, this is not the case as musicians themselves are actively involved in trying to progress their careers and trying to get access to these ‘cultural industries’ that can help them reach an audience.

Frith acknowledges that the two career models he outlines have to be seen as ideal types implying that ‘real’ careers usually are not placed within either model and would usually have some features of both types of careers (Frith, 1988). However, his way of thinking about musician’s careers is helpful as it provides the kinds of dynamics that can be found in real careers. For example, U2 could be defined as one of the few superstars who made it to the top of the pyramid following the traditional rock-career ladder. The career start of Esmee Denters can be seen as an example of the Talent pool at work in the new media era. This Dutch girl became world famous because she was offered a record deal by Justin Timberlake after she had established a large online following through her posting of home videos on YouTube featuring her singing cover versions of hit songs.

Measuring Career Success

This brings me to the issue of career success, which can be used as a concept to compare the careers of different musicians. For example, in the beginning of this chapter, I did compare the different careers of U2, the Zutons and the anonymous air guitar player, and I evaluated how one was more successful than the other. But what is career success, and, how is it measured in such a way that it enables an objective comparison between different musicians or different types of musicians? Judge and his colleagues note that success is an evaluative concept and that judgements about success always depend on the perspective of the person who judges (Judge et al., 1995). Furthermore, career success is a multi-dimensional concept, meaning that it encompasses several dimensions on which the evaluation can be made whether someone is successful or not. Career success from the point of view of the individual musician could for instance mean that this musician considers him- or herself successful if they are able to make a living from making music, or they could only consider themselves successful if their artistic output is said to be of importance by others such as critics, fans and other musicians. Likewise, from a critic’s standpoint, a musician who is successful in economic terms might not be considered successful in artistic terms.

Similar differences in what entails success occur in the way that success of musicians, or a broader category of artists, is measured in empirical studies. Some scholars have focused on aesthetic success and applied criteria concerned with the artistic impact of the musical works, such as inclusion of compositions in reference works on music, or ratings on aesthetic significance by experts or critics (Kozbelt, 2005; Simonton, 1986). Here the judging perspective is from critics and experts who evaluate which works of music are ‘worth’ more than others.

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Related to this way of understanding success is to look at the reputation of the artist, as was first proposed by Howard Becker in his now classic work on artistic production, 'Art Worlds'. One of his main conclusions is that reputation determines the status of an artist. An artist is admired because of the works of art that he or she produces. Through the production of these works of art, the artist's reputation increases. At the same time, these works of art are also judged based on the artist's reputation, that is, the works of art that he or she has produced in the past. Becker also acknowledged that reputational value can be translated into financial value, reputation then becomes the foundation of economic success (Becker, 1982, p.23). Similar to studies on aesthetic success, in studies that take up this approach, the reputation of an artist is assessed by experts or critics (e.g., Beckert & Rössel, 2004). Both approaches are valid methods of considering the differences between artists or musicians and establishing a hierarchy, but they are always based on subjective notions and involve some sort of analysis of the artistic output of the artists at hand. In this dissertation, I do not focus on the artistic output of the musicians, that is, primarily their songs and their performances.

Therefore, I consider a different way to measure success from the field of career psychology. A common distinction made in this field is between subjective and objective career success. Subjective career success is defined as the individual's feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction with one's career. Here the focus is on intrinsic indicators of success such as the question of whether the individual considers him- or herself successful. Hence, this kind of success is also referred to as career satisfaction (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990; Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001). Objective career success can be defined as career success that is observable by others, based on objective and visible criteria (Jaskolka, Beyer, & Trice, 1985). This form of career success is based on extrinsic indicators of success, that is, objectively observable career accomplishments. Studies within organizational psychology often focus on institutionalized careers and use salary or the number of promotions within a company as objectively observable career accomplishments (e.g., Judge et al., 1995; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005).

In this dissertation, I focus on objective success measured through the career achievements of musicians. Several authors in the field of popular music studies have noted that musicians, or their musical products, are in contact with their audiences in three ways: through media exposure, sales of their recordings and live performances (Frith, 1988; Longhurst, 2007; Shuker, 2001; Toynbee, 2000). These also represent the three most important ways for musicians to gain an income with their musical activities.

Turmoil in the music industry: opportunities and threats for musicians

Over the last decade, there have been considerable changes in the media landscape that have impacted the music industry in general but also have had far-reaching consequences for the music making practices and career development of individual musicians. Personal computers became faster and cheaper and continue to do so, broadband Internet connections became widely available, recording and mixing software such as GarageBand or Pro Tools are getting increasingly user-friendly, and online social communities such as MySpace and FaceBook have seen incredible growth in users, and important parts of these communities

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are dedicated to music. These and related technological and societal developments have increased the possibilities for individual musicians to make professional quality recordings, share them online and get involved in grassroots promotion and do-it-yourself marketing. Therefore, these technologies have made the threshold for being a musician even lower.

At the same time, this leads to an even more diffuse market and a possibly greater over-supply of aspiring musicians. Likewise, the same technologies have also opened up the possibilities for consumers to illegally download music on a large scale, which is often claimed to have caused dramatic decreases in record sales by the music industry. Although legal downloading through platforms such as iTunes and new formats such as mobile ringtones have become increasingly successful, these sales do not yet make up for the loss of sales, according to the music industry (IFPI, 2008, 2009; NVPI, 2009). This has resulted in a situation where most record companies have become more hesitant to invest in new artists (Rutten & Driessen, 2005).

Both academics and industry observers have also noted that legal and illegal downloading do have positive effects as well, such as the increased interest in music and increased ticket sales and visitor numbers at live venues (Huygen et al., 2009; van Dalen, van der Hoek, & Vreeke, 2009). Also, there is much debate on whether the rise of the Internet economy will result in the emergence of the *Long Tail*, a concept first coined by Chris Anderson (Anderson, 2004). In short, this theory argues that because of the fact that all music can now be made available online - as there are no restrictions to shelf space or storage-, this will result in record labels and online music stores selling "less of more" (Anderson, 2004, 2006). That is, the online economy for cultural products is characterized by the sales of less copies of a larger number of different recordings whereas the 'offline' economy is characterized by the *Pareto Principle* where the sales for 20% of all available titles make up for 80% of all sales (Brynjolfsson, Hu, & Simester, 2007). It has been argued that the increased online availability of recordings provides opportunities for niche-market music (Anderson, 2004, 2006).

Related to these technological and economic developments is a societal shift outlined by Richard Florida in his account of the "rise of the creative class". Florida argues that most Western societies are currently shifting from a post-industrial society, where the 'service class' was the most important economic working force, to a situation where the occupational group that is involved with the creation of new ideas, technology and creative content has become the most prominent for the economic growth of cities, regions and countries (Florida, 2004, 2006). Although his general theory has both advocates and opponents, research in different countries has shown that the creative sector is becoming increasingly important (see for example Missingham, 2006 on the situation in the United Kingdom, or; Raes & Hofstede, 2005 on the situation in the Netherlands). This has led to an increased interest by local and national governments in the cultural industries and creative professions resulting in the establishment, or refurbishment, of many new live venues throughout the Netherlands (van Dalen et al., 2009) and new professional educational institutes for pop musicians such as the Rock Academy in Tilburg and new popular music programs at conservatories in Rotterdam and Amsterdam. More generally, this has also led to a more 'serious' status of popular music within the Netherlands (see, for example: Kroeske & Fictoor, 2009).

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Although not all of these developments are discussed in detail in this dissertation, it has to be considered that they offer both opportunities and threats to the career development of the aspiring musician. Likewise, the nature of these developments shows that the study of popular musicians can involve many different academic disciplines. Below, I briefly explain the academic standpoint that I take up in this study.

Positioning

Scholars with different backgrounds and from diverse disciplines including, but not limited to psychology, cultural sociology, humanities, economics, management studies, communication and media studies, cultural studies, have written about popular musicians. It reaches beyond the scope of this dissertation to discuss all of these here. However, I do want to position my own research in conjunction to three major fields of research: *Cultural sociology*, *Ethnographic studies on music making* and *Career psychology*.

Studies in the field of cultural sociology often focus on the process of cultural production and how issues of power play a role in this process (e.g., Becker, 1982; Bourdieu, 1993, 1996; Burnett, 1996; Frith, 2001b; Hirsch, 1972; Negus, 1992; Peterson, 1976; Peterson & Anand, 2004). In his discussion on the sociology of music, Timothy Dowd (2007, p.250) notes that "...sociologists study popular music in relation to issues such as subcultures (e.g., Hebdige, 1979), the reproduction of inequality (e.g., Bourdieu, 1984), globalization (e.g., Hesmondhalgh, 2000), identity formation (e.g., Negus & Román Velázquez, 2002), and social movements (e.g., Roscigno & Danaher, 2001)". As this list shows, studies within this field usually do not focus on the individual career development of musicians.

As I mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are a number of ethnographic studies on music making that do study the practices of the individual musician, but their focus is primarily on the practices of music making (Cohen, 1991; Finnegan, 1989; Jones, 1998). Although these studies do look at how these individuals perceive themselves as musicians and also discuss some of the strategies that the musicians try to apply in order to become successful, they do not focus on the question of what characteristics of the musicians themselves are important for the presence or absence of success.

This particular question is posed by career psychologists, and one of the main issues in this field is to understand how careers work and what characteristics can explain career success (Michael B. Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989b; Michael Bernard Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Holland, 1985; Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005). However, as this field is closely linked to organizational psychology, these studies often focus on institutionalized careers and overlook the professional groups of the more 'artistic' careers, such as musicians.

Within this dissertation, I make a connection between these research fields as I aim to find out what background, personal and environmental characteristics of aspiring pop musicians are determinants of their career success. I conclude this introduction by shortly introducing the four studies in this dissertation. These studies have either been published as individual articles or have been submitted for publication. Being self-contained, each study has its own abstract, introduction, discussion and reference list.

General Introduction

Outline of dissertation

In the first chapter, that focuses on the career entry of musicians, I present the findings from a qualitative study among artist and repertoire (A&R) managers working in the Dutch music industry. These A&R managers are employed by record companies and form important intermediaries that can help musicians progress in their careers, as they are the 'gatekeeper' of the record company. As I argue in this chapter, signing a deal with a record company is an important step in a musician's career. I should note here that although it is an important step, it should not be seen as the 'ultimate' step to success or even that signing with a record company is the only way to become successful.

Ten semi-structured, in-depth interviews form the basis of this study, and the main research questions posed in this study include: 1) What factors influence the career success of musicians? 2) How do A&R managers go about selecting new artists and what selection criteria do they apply? The respondents provided insights from their professional experience, and this resulted in a list of characteristics that were said to be important factors in the careers of pop musicians. Although this study only focuses on the practices of the A&R manager, this kind of 'creative manager' is an example of the different intermediaries that can play a role in a musician's career. Others can include booking agents, who are involved in 'selling' the musician as a performing artist to live venues and music festivals; music publishers, who are involved in 'exploiting' the rights of the musician's songs; and artist managers, who are usually involved in all different aspects of the business side of a musician's career.

The second chapter deals with a different kind of career entry, or perhaps a different kind of musical career. In this chapter, the findings from a study on participants in the *Idols* talent competition are discussed. The successful television show *Idols* is set up around a talent competition where a large number of contestants compete to become the nation's next Pop Idol. Contestants are selected by expert judges and audience voting determines the competition's outcome. In this study, I focus on the question of whether the contestants' characteristics influence the outcome of the show. A sample of audition contestants ($n = 369$) and contestants who entered the final rounds ($n = 27$) completed a survey including questions on their background, personality and professional context. These two groups were compared in order to see if the group of finalists differed significantly from the group of audition contestants.

In the third chapter, I present findings from a cross-sectional study among a group of aspiring professional pop musicians ($N = 340$). These musicians responded to online questionnaires. The main objective of this study is to explore whether findings from earlier research in the field of career psychology as well as findings from studies on popular musicians and development of musical skills are applicable to the study of career success of popular musicians. A number of background and demographic variables, intrapersonal variables, and contextual variables are included in this study, and using a hierarchical multiple regression, I discuss which of these variables can best explain the differences in career success within the group of musicians.

General Introduction

The fourth chapter focuses on a longitudinal analysis of the careers of this group of pop musicians over a three-year period. In this study, I distinguish between four groups of musicians: 1) those who are relatively unsuccessful at the first time of measurement (T=1) and become more successful; 2) those who are relatively unsuccessful at T=1 and whose level of success remain more or less stable; 3) those who are relatively successful at T=1 and whose success decreases over time; and 4) those who are relatively successful at T=1 and who are able to hold on to this relatively high level of success over time. Based on findings from Chapter 1 and Chapter 3, the influence of three important independent variables, social support, professional attitude and professional network on the longitudinal career development of these four groups is studied in order to find out how these groups differ from one another and what this tells us about the career development of popular musicians.

Finally, in the general discussion, I analyse the main findings from the individual studies and establish a connection to the research question central to this dissertation. Furthermore, I elaborate on the theoretical implications as well as the limitations of the studies and present suggestions for future research.

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CHAPTER 1

BREAKING INTO THE POPULAR RECORD INDUSTRY: AN INSIDER'S VIEW ON THE CAREER ENTRY OF POP MUSICIANS*

* This chapter is based on: Zwaan, K., & Ter Bogt, T. F. M. (2009). Research Note: Breaking into the Popular Record Industry: An Insider's View on the Career Entry of Pop Musicians. *European Journal of Communication*, 24(1), 89–101.

ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the career entry and development of professional musicians in the Netherlands. Ten artist and repertoire (A&R) managers, key decision-makers in the selection process at the input side of the record industry, were interviewed to investigate the essential characteristics a musician requires to become a successful professional. In addition, the practices and criteria applied in the A&R manager's selection process were discussed. Based on these interviews, a number of background, personality and contextual factors influencing career success were identified. The musician's social environment should be supportive but critical, while likeability, perfectionism, motivation, insecurity and self-criticism were said to be key personality traits to become successful. For A&R managers, the most important source for finding out about new talent is their professional network. The main criteria for selection are the musician's skills, quality of their music and live performance, and the perceived possibility to sell their music and attract media exposure. The study's findings are consistent with earlier research on the American and British record industry practices, indicating that such practices in the record industry are persistent over time, and that they are similar in other, smaller European music markets.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on popular music production usually focus on the organization of the record industry (Frith, 1996, 2001; Negus, 1992, 1999; Peterson and Berger, 1975; Peterson and Ryan, 1983; Toynbee, 2000). The career development of its main characters, the artists, has received far less attention. With notable exceptions (Cohen, 1991; Finnegan, 1989; Jones, 1998; Peterson and Ryan, 1983), relatively few studies have focused on musicians and their entry into the record industry. Some authors have noted the crucial role of artist and repertoire (A&R) managers in the selection of artists (Frith, 1996; Negus, 1992, 1999). In this study, 10 of the most influential Dutch A&R managers were interviewed in order to investigate (1) what individual characteristics they perceive to be beneficial to becoming a successful professional musician and (2) what selection criteria they apply when signing artists.

Peterson and Ryan (1983) state that the usual means of career entry for musicians is 'breaking into' their chosen line of work. Instead of clearly defined requirements or formal selection procedures, musicians must find ways of gaining the interest of record industry executives. Networking is important, a finding repeated in later studies by Jones (1998) and Giuffre (1999). Record industry staff play a key role in these networks as they decide who 'gets a break' and who does not. This type of decision-maker has been referred to as gatekeeper (Shoemaker, 1991; Shoemaker and Reese, 1996), cultural intermediary (Bourdieu, 1984; Negus, 2002) or creative manager (Hesmondhalgh, 2002, 2006; Ryan, 1992). These concepts refer to creative industry personnel (e.g. the A&R manager), acting as crucial mediators between the interests of the creators of symbolic content (the musicians) and the companies that reproduce and circulate this symbolic content (the record companies).

The Internet has been described as a democratizing medium (Fisher and Wright, 2001), in that it enables musicians to bypass the 'middlemen' of the record industry and reach audiences directly. In recent years, only a few new acts (e.g. Arctic Monkeys and Panic at the Disco) have succeeded in utilizing the possibilities of the Internet to build a broad fan base. However, it was through their record labels that these bands were further marketed and promoted, showing that the bargaining power of the 'offline' record companies is still largely intact (see also Kretschmer, 2005). Record companies still occupy a central position, as they have the ability to boost a musician's career by financing album recordings, enhancing access to national media and securing national distribution (Jones, 1998; Negus, 1996; Toynbee, 2000). The oversupply of aspiring artists forces record companies to make selections, and the A&R manager plays an important role in deciding who will be signed (Negus, 1992; Stratton, 1981, 1983).

Based on interviews with record industry personnel, Negus (1992) has formulated a list of the main selection criteria for judging new artists on the basis of the quality of: (1) the live, stage performance, (2) the originality and quality of the songs, (3) the recorded performance and voice, (4) appearance and image, (5) level of commitment and motivation and (6) the achievements of the act so far. In other studies, personality and social context variables have been related to career success. For instance, family background, personality and motivation, as well as the social and professional context were found to influence career success (Corbin Sicoli, 1995; Howe and Davidson, 2003; Kogan, 2002; Soldz and Vaillant, 1999; Seibert et al., 2001; Stremikis, 2002). The selection process itself has attracted scant attention (Frith, 2000;

Negus, 1992). Moreover, as studies outside the UK and the US are non-existent, it is important to investigate whether findings from earlier music industry research also apply to other national contexts. The Dutch music market is the 10th largest in the world (IFPI, 2008), and while it is relatively open to US and UK influences, Dutch music has a market share of about 25 percent. Acts are promoted by both major and smaller, independent Dutch record companies (NVPI, 2007, 2008). Studying the Dutch music industry context is interesting, inasmuch as music production cultures in other small or medium-sized countries, with a mix of music from international and local artists, may be similar to the Dutch situation. In sum, this study investigates A&R managers' selection process of artists they predict will become successful.

METHOD AND RESPONDENTS

Similar to Stratton (1981, 1983) and Negus (1992), we make use of A&R managers as informants. Our data consisted of 10 semi-structured, in-depth interviews with an average length of 60 minutes. Respondents were either A&R experts employed by a major record company¹ or who worked for an independent record label specializing in a specific genre. This selection of experts covers a substantial segment of the Dutch record industry. An overview of the respondents' backgrounds is provided below (See Table 1).

Table 1. *Respondent background information*

Name (Age ^a), Interview date:	Position ^b and name of company:	Has worked for or works for:
Niels Aalberts (33), 22 October 2004	A&R manager and owner of <i>EHPO</i> , an A&R consultancy company	<i>Arcade</i> , [<i>PIAS</i>], <i>Univer- sal</i> , <i>Sony/BMG</i>
Wilbert Mutsaers (35), 23 November 2004	Marketing Director ^c at <i>Universal Music Netherlands</i>	<i>Sony Music</i> , <i>BMG</i> , <i>Mojo Concerts</i>
Daan van Rijsbergen (42), 2 December 2004	A&R manager, producer and owner of <i>B2Music</i> , an A&R consultancy, artist management and publishing company	<i>Talpa Music</i> , <i>Sony Music</i>
Henkjan Smits (43), 11 January 2005	A&R manager and owner of <i>Henkjan Smits producties</i> , an A&R consultancy company	<i>PolyGram</i> , <i>BMG</i> , <i>Idols</i> , <i>Yorin/RTL</i>

¹ The four major record companies are Sony/BMG, Universal, EMI and Warner. In 2006, the market share in the Netherlands of these record companies was about 70 percent (NVPI, 2007).

Breaking into the Popular Record Industry

Table 1. (Continued)

Name (Age ^a), Interview date:	Position ^b and name of company:	Has worked for or works for:
Menno Timmerman (43), 17 November 2004	A&R manager and owner of <i>TheMen-O</i> , an A&R consultancy company	<i>Polydor, BMG, Warner</i>
Alain Verhave (40), 14 December 2004	A&R manager at CNR / Roadrunner	<i>CNR / Roadrunner</i>
Paul Zijlstra (44), 13 January 2005	A&R manager and owner of <i>Bula Music</i> , an A&R consultancy company	<i>Phonogram, BMG, Island, Universal</i>
Dick de Groot (30), 4 March 2005	A&R manager and owner of <i>Be Yourself Music</i> , a record com- pany specialized in dance music	<i>Basic Beat recordings, ID&T Music</i>
Kees de Koning (34), 11 January 2005	A&R manager and owner of <i>Top Notch</i> , a record company specialized in hip-hop	<i>Virgin/EMI, OOR, 3FM, VPRO</i>
Ferry Roseboom (39), 4 November 2004	A&R manager and owner of <i>Excelsior Recordings</i> , a record company specialized in alterna- tive rock	<i>Excelsior Recordings</i>

^a Age refers to the respondent's age at the time the interview was conducted.

^b Most of the A&R managers in the above table are also describes as owners. In some cases, this ownership relates to their A&R consultancy companies and corresponds with a shift in outsourcing the A&R 'discipline'. In the case of the smaller specialized record companies (*Be Yourself Music*, *Excelsior* and *Top Notch*) the owner is typically the one person involved with all aspects of the company, most notably the acquisition and development of new artists, i.e. the A&R strategy.

^c Although Wilbert Mutsaers official job description is marketing director, he is actively involved in the company's A&R management. Additionally he has worked as A&R manager with several record companies. Therefore we included him in this study as A&R expert.

The interview topic list included questions about respondents' definition of success and their practices in the selection process, as well as questions on musicians' personality, motivation and the importance of contextual factors. All of the interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim and the transcripts were analysed using MAXqda software. The method of our analysis was based on Strauss and Corbin (1998) in their discussion of grounded theory and Boeije (2002) in her approach to the constant comparative method.

Chapter 1

During the first phase of our analysis, open coding, text fragments were given codes to identify the main theme. In the second phase, axial coding, the coded segments were compared both within and between interviews and connections between different codes were established. The third phase, selective coding, consisted of producing a full description of these connections and their implications for our research questions.

RESULTS

The results are divided into three parts that reflect the main interview themes. In the first part, we present the way that the respondents define success. In the second part, we focus on the different factors that influence success. In the third and last part of the results section, we discuss the practices and selection criteria used by the A&R manager.

What is success?

There was strong agreement among the respondents on the definition of success. All of the respondents noted that, from a record industry perspective, being successful as a musician means being profitable to the record company. As such, record sales can be seen as an indicator of success:

From the point of view of the record company ... being successful simply means to generate sales ... [record companies] are commercial companies, and they simply have to make money.

Central to this notion of success, both for the musician and the record company, is the idea of remuneration and added economic value. Therefore, we label this the *economic* dimension of success.

In addition to the economic dimension, a second dimension of success emerged from the interviews. Here, success is defined by intrinsic values such as artistic development, recognition by other musicians and a general, subjective feeling of being successful. When the respondents talk about subjective success, most respondents take the musicians' perspective. However, some of the record industry executives themselves also consider success in subjective terms. Here, success is a subjective evaluative concept. Hence, this second dimension was labelled the *subjective* dimension of success.

In sum, we argue that the respondents' remarks about success can be grouped into two dimensions of success. One is an economic dimension connected to objectively observable achievements such as record sales. The other is a subjective dimension related to subjective evaluations of success. In addition to these dimensions, the respondents distinguished two perspectives on success: the record industry's perspective and the musician's perspective.

What factors influence the career success of musicians?

The common understanding among the respondents about the concept of success made it possible to systematically compare their answers on the question what factors influence career success. In general, these factors can be divided into three categories: background, personality and social context (see Table 2).

From the discussion of the influence of family background on musician's success, two main themes emerged in the interviews. The first, labelled *family background* in Table 2,

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referred to the musician's socioeconomic background. There was no agreement among the respondents about the preferred socio-economic background. Some respondents argued that musicians with higher-class backgrounds have better access to both economic and social capital and therefore have better possibilities. High-class descent was equalled with practical advantages such as time available to dedicate to practice, money available to buy equipment

Table 2. *Factors mentioned by respondents*

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
Background										
- Family background	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
- Musical family		X	X		X	X	X	X		
- Musical socialisation		X				X	X		X	X
- Musical education	X	X					X			
- Charisma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
- Appearance / looks		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Gender	X	X	X	X	X	X	X			X
Personality										
- Likeability	X	X			X				X	
- Insecurity	X		X			X		X		
- Perfectionism			X		X			X		
- Self-criticism		X	X			X	X	X		
- Willing to work hard	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X
- Resilience		X	X		X					
- Motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Egoism			X		X					X
Social context										
- Critical environment	X	X	X		X	X		X		
- Social support			X	X	X	X		X	X	
- Help from others	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	

Note: This table is based on the code matrix made in MAXqda. In this table, an X indicates that the respondents mentioned this topic. The order of the respondents in the columns is random, there is no connection to the order of the respondents used in Table 1.

or pay for a recording studio, or having access to the music industry through parents. Other respondents argued that musicians with lower-class backgrounds show a stronger dedica-

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tion to become professional musicians. For these respondents, lower-class background was equalled with high levels of motivation and determination.

The second theme with regard to the musician's family background was related to the wider context of *musical socialisation* and *musical education*. The respondents expressed opposing views on the influence of coming from a *musical family* or having had music lessons. Moreover, even those respondents who did stress the importance of musical socialisation acknowledged that this does not automatically produce better or more talented musicians. The disagreement about musical socialisation seems to be confusing, however, one respondent provided a plausible explanation:

You have to be touched by music one way or another, either as a consumer or through your family members. You have to be influenced in some way in order to develop your musical talent. I think there are thousands of people who have some kind of potential talent, but because it never gets triggered, they will never develop these talents.

It is clear to all respondents that musicians should 'touched' by music, but their interest in music can be 'triggered' in many different ways, for example by their family, teachers, or peers, or even by the media.

All respondents agreed on the importance of appearance and stated that it helps to be good looking. Most of the respondents distinguish between *appearance* or *looks* on the one hand and *charisma* on the other. A number of respondents indicated that although looks and charisma are related, an artist can be charismatic without complying with certain Western beauty norms. Even stronger, as one respondent argued, being charismatic can compensate for not being good looking.

With regard to appearance, the respondents distinguish between male and female artists. Some respondents argue that, parallel to society in general, women are judged by their looks more often than men. Generally speaking, for women it is more often important to comply with beauty norms. See for example, the following quote:

That is different for men and women. Men, by definition, have to have sex appeal and sex appeal can be anything, it does not necessarily emerge from looks ... for women, it is a shame to say so, but there is some sort of ideal image, some sort of beauty ideal.

However, it has to be noted that all of the respondents were male and this in itself might also contribute to the distinction in judging female or male artists. In the interviews no gender issues, other than this distinction, were mentioned.

With regard to personality, a number of respondents mentioned being *likable* as an important personality trait. In most cases, the respondents referred to selection processes at radio or television stations. When radio station staff likes a musician, they enjoy working with this person, and they will help them establish a professional career. Some respondents noted this is also applicable to the A&R manager: if they like a musician, they are more willing to work with this musician. The respondents claim that particularly in the Dutch music market being likable is an important personality trait. According to these respondents, so-called 'star behaviour' is not appreciated in the Netherlands. Musicians should be 'ordinary', 'nice' and they should 'act normal'. This is illustrated in the following quote:

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In the Netherlands, being likable is always a very strong quality. In the Netherlands being likable is more important than quality. It is not the best band that will eventually be the most successful; it is the most likable band that will eventually be the most successful. ... if they like you, they will wish for you to be successful in your career.

It can be questioned whether there is indeed a cultural difference between the Netherlands and other countries with regard to likeability. Nonetheless, there is a strong consensus on this idea among the respondents. One respondent gives a possible explanation by saying the number of people working in the media and record industry is small in the Netherlands. As a result, Dutch musicians always have to deal with the same group of people and should therefore try to maintain good relationships with them.

Another personality trait that was mentioned was *insecurity*. According to the respondents, successful musicians are often insecure about the quality of their music. As a result, these musicians strive for perfection; they want their music to be perfect, because only perfect is good enough. Although being insecure or being a perfectionist are not seen as traits necessary to be successful, it is striking that most of the respondents acknowledged that many successful artists are insecure perfectionists.

A related trait, being *self-critical*, also refers to the musicians' own judgement of their music. If someone is not self-critical, he or she will be easily satisfied about the quality of the music. Unlike insecurity and perfectionism, this trait is mentioned as a selection criterion. Musicians who sent in demos of poor quality are considered to be uncritical and as a result will be disregarded by the A&R manager. The respondents argued that it is very important for musicians to remain self-critical throughout their careers. The reason for this is put forward by one of the respondents when he describes the process of becoming famous:

I often notice the insecurity of many artists, they search for a certain safe environment and they think they can find this in the people that move into their circle of friends. But these people are often very uncritical towards the artist.

As this respondent argues, an uncritical social environment is considered to negatively influence a musician's artistic development. In addition, as another respondent argues, it is important that artists are *supported* by their environment:

Yes, their environment needs to support the artist in what they do because this only increases the artist's motivation. (...) In particular in the beginning, it can be very tough. If you go for it, there will be hard times, even for established artists. Then your friends and family are there to support you.

This quote also indicates that artists have to cope with hard times. All respondents recognize that starting a professional career as a musician, it requires *hard work, perseverance* and *resilience*, that is, the ability to cope with drawbacks and criticism. Musicians should be willing to sacrifice large amounts of their time to the development of their musical and performance skills. Consequently, musicians should be highly *motivated* and show a willingness to work hard. Having a strong inner drive to achieve enables musicians to remain motivated and show perseverance in achieving their goals. This inner drive is described in terms like having 'a blind desire', 'a passion', 'a fire', and even 'being possessed'. In some cases, this inner drive may lead to egoism. Some musicians will sacrifice everything, including jobs, relation-

ships and friends, in order to reach their 'higher goal'. One respondent even explicitly states that being *egoistic* is essential in becoming a professional musician.

To sum up, the results in this section suggest that the musician should have had some sort of musical socialisation. In addition, likability, insecurity, perfectionism, self-criticism and motivation were said to be important personality traits for musician to become successful. Finally, the musician's social environment should be supportive but critical.

The selection process of the A&R manager

The factors described above were all considered to influence success. However, in selecting new artists, the A&R managers do not consciously take into account most of these background or personality characteristics. Only *likeability, appearance/looks, charisma, and motivation* were considered to be central selection criteria. In this section we will concentrate on how the A&R manager searches for new artists, and we will elaborate on the selection criteria they apply. Table 3 summarizes the findings with regard to selection sources and selection criteria.

Sending demonstration recordings (*demos*) to record companies, a strategy often applied by musicians, is apparently not a very effective one. Most of the respondents reported receiving dozens of demos every week, which is an indication of the oversupply of musicians. In addition, the respondents unanimously claimed that demos are not the common source they use to select new artists. Some respondents ascribe this imbalance to a lack of knowledge and poor marketing skills among musicians:

[Sending in demos] is the most passive form for bands that do not know their way and people who do not know how they must sell themselves, because a band should also have a sense of marketing.

This quote indicates that musicians should know how to sell themselves, that is, they should have some marketing skills. But it also implies that if a musician knows his or her way into the record industry, they know A&R managers do not rely on demos. Clearly, the A&R managers rely on other sources when scouting for new talent. All of the respondents informed us that they use their *professional networks* to come across new and promising artists:

Apparently there are things that are noticed by a number of different persons, like: 'this is really very good.' And that kind of network is where we get our things from, we know people and they know us ... a manager, or a booker, or a producer, or a songwriter, or it can be anyone. ... the Netherlands is a small country when it comes to that ... but if someone of Mojo directs someone to me I will think: 'Well, he would not just direct anyone to me.' Then I will have to look at it. Yes, there is some sort of selection taking place there.²

² *Mojo* is the largest Dutch concert promoter and a subsidiary of *Live Nation*. *Mojo* books artist for most of the venues in the Dutch club circuit and organizes major Dutch festivals such as *Lowlands* and *North Sea Jazz Festival*.

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Table 3. Selection sources and selection criteria mentioned by respondents

	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8	R9	R10
Selection sources										
- Demos	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Professional network	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	
- Talent competitions		X		X	X	X			X	
- Internet			X		X		X	X	X	
Selection criteria										
- Quality of performance	X		X			X	X	X	X	X
- Quality of music	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Composing skills	X	X	X			X				X
- Instrument skills	X	X	X			X	X	X	X	
- Performance skills	X		X			X	X	X	X	
- Musical talent	X	X			X	X	X		X	
- Audience appeal		X	X	X	X	X	X			X
- Media appeal	X	X		X	X		X		X	
- Appearance/ looks		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Charisma	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X
- Likeability	X	X			X				X	
- Marketing skills		X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Record industry knowledge		X			X	X		X	X	X
- Motivation	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
- Innovative	X	X	X						X	X
- Authenticity	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X	
- Intuition	X		X	X		X		X		
- Experience			X			X		X	X	
- Feelings during listening		X	X		X	X	X	X	X	

Note: This table is based on the code matrix made in MAXqda. In this table, an X indicates that the respondents mentioned this topic. The order of the respondents in the columns is random, there is no connection to the order of the respondents used in Table 1.

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This quote illustrates two important issues: first, it is important for new artists to be noticed by different people. For A&R managers, this is a signal that there is something unique about this artist. In addition, this quote also shows that when an artist or a band is recommended to the A&R manager by someone in his professional network, this information is valued more than an anonymous source, which is the case with demos. The talent or skills of an artist are legitimized by the opinions of the A&R manager's professional network.

From the different interviews, we found that A&R managers have access to diverse professional networks which consists of journalists, radio DJs, venue bookers, staff at other record companies, booking agencies, management agencies, and organisations such as the *Nederlands Pop Instituut*, and *Conamus*.^{3,4} In order to be noticed by an A&R manager, the artist should try to get noticed throughout the professional network of the A&R manager, this requires *knowledge of the record industry and marketing skills*. *Band competitions* and *talent shows* such as the *Grote Prijs van Nederland*⁵, form another source for selection. These competitions are often based on a format where a professional jury evaluates and ranks the participating artists. Regularly, one of the jury members is a record industry executive. Even though it was mentioned as a way of scouting for new artists, these competitions are not always considered to be very valuable:

There is the circuit of pop competitions. Strictly speaking these also include Idols and Popstars, Grote Prijs van Nederland and those kinds of things. They [the record industry] are not really carried away by these competitions, but sometimes things pop up from there.

Yet another source, mentioned by only a few respondents, is the use of new media such as Internet forums that can feature online popularity charts. These kinds of websites are often a mixture of journalistic as well as audience input. Here, the talent and quality of the music is legitimized by a combination of journalistic appeal and audience appeal.

After the initial process of getting noticed by the A&R manager, the actual selection process starts. It is rather obvious that the A&R manager would want to listen to the artist's music, and so, it is not surprising that there is a strong consensus among the respondents that *musical skills* and the *quality of the music* are the most important and central selection criteria. No matter how good musicians are at selling themselves, or how good-looking they are, the music itself has to be of good quality. One respondent expressed this as follows:

But you can't put great ideas on top of shit music. Then it is a matter of excessive decoration of a common thing, and it will not sell.

The notion of what makes good music is a subjective opinion. The respondents indicate that good music has to be *'innovative'*, *'authentic'*, and *'unique'*. Instead of explaining the exact meaning of these terms, the respondents used specific examples of artists they had worked with, and who had become successful, to illustrate their point.

³ *Nederlands Pop Instituut* (NPI) [Dutch Rock & Pop Institute] is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Culture to promote Dutch music at home and abroad. Since 2009 it is part of the *Music Centre the Netherlands* (MCN).

⁴ *Conamus* is a foundation dedicated to the promotion and support of Dutch music. This foundation supports events like the *Amsterdam Dance Event* and *Eurosonic / Noorderslag* as well as the Dutch delegation to *Midem* and *Popkomm*.

⁵ *Grote Prijs van Nederland* [Grand Price of the Netherlands], is the largest national band competition in the Netherlands.

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Moreover, the respondents claimed that the music should hold a potential to be appreciated by a large *audience*. The ability to decide what members of this audience will consider to be good music is what one respondent calls 'the talent of the A&R manager'. In deciding whether music is good or bad, some of the respondents explain that they go by their *intuition*, their *experience* and the *feeling they get when listening to the music*. The A&R manager's judgement of the music is also based on an assessment of how likely it is that *radio and TV stations* will put it on their playlists. Radio and music television channels are still the most important media for the dissemination of music. Some respondents pointed out that after an artist is selected by the A&R manager and gets the support of a record company, this only marks the beginning of new selection processes:

What the audience gets to hear is by definition what the radio stations put on their playlists. They make a selection based on what does or does not fit their profile. A lot of music does not make it past these first lock-gates, these barriers.

The use of the words 'lock-gates' and 'barriers' are analogous to the use of the metaphor of gatekeeping used in news selection theory. Important to note here is that both commercial and public radio stations select music to fit their 'profiles'. These profiles are based on reaching a certain demographic group that is of interest to advertisers. For A&R managers this might not be the key criterion in the selection of new artists, however, they do take these 'media politics' into consideration.

After positively evaluating the artist's music, the A&R manager usually wants to see the artist perform live. With regard to evaluating live performances, some of the respondents mention they pay attention to the way the artists dress, the way they handle their instruments and, more general, how they present themselves to their audience. The A&R manager evaluates the quality of the live performance as well as the artist's looks and charisma.

Taken together, the respondents indicate that the quality of the music and the quality of the live performance serve as the two most important selection criteria. Central to these selection criteria are the musician's composing, instrument, and performance skills reflecting his or her musical talent. Other important factors are possible audience and media appeal as well as the musician's looks, charisma, and motivation. We must add that although our description of the selection process could imply a number of successive steps, (hearing about an artist, listening to their music and then going to see their live performance), in practice this is usually not a rigid linear process. Moreover, we argue that the A&R manager's selection process is both preceded and followed by other selection processes. So, for an artist to actually reach their audience, multiple selection processes are involved.

CONCLUSION

With regard to the A&R manager's selection process, our main conclusions are twofold. First and foremost, our findings indicate the importance of the A&R manager's professional network for the selection of new artists. Essentially, other music industry professionals within the A&R manager's network legitimize the quality of both artist and music. This reflects earlier findings on the importance for artists to have access to the professional net-

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work (Giuffre, 1999; Jones, 1998; Peterson and Ryan, 1983). Musicians with connections to this network have a better chance of becoming successful professionals.

Second, although our respondents identified a number of background, personality and contextual factors that they related to the career success of musicians, in general they did not consider these characteristics to be the most important criteria for the selection of new artists. Our list of selection criteria is largely consistent with Negus's findings on the British record industry in the 1980s (Negus, 1992): that is, our respondents mentioned the importance of the live performance, quality of the music, musical skills, appearance, motivation as well as potential media and audience appeal.

Additionally, a central finding is that A&R managers were straightforward in acknowledging the subjectivity of their evaluation of quality, and that they relied heavily on their assessment of the market potential of artists. Our findings on the A&R manager's professional practices are consistent with earlier research on the British and American record industry (see Frith, 1996; Negus, 1992, 1999). This suggests that many conventions and practices in the record industry are persistent over time and that they are applicable to other, smaller European music markets.

A limitation of our study is the possible inconsistency between the selection criteria described by our respondents and their actual practice. This issue is relevant to similar research on selection processes in cultural production and is in need of further study. Also, because our study was limited to the A&R manager's perspective, it would be interesting to compare these findings to the perspectives of other decision-makers within the field of popular music production, such as the concert industry or the music media. Finally, the musician's perspective is also in need of further academic attention.

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CHAPTER 2

FROM ZERO TO HERO? AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF THE PREDICTORS OF SUCCESS IN THE DUTCH IDOLS COMPETITION*

* This chapter is based on: Zwaan, K. & ter Bogt T.F.M. (*in press*). From Zero to Hero? An Exploratory Study of the Predictors of Success in the Dutch Idols Competition. *Popular Music and Society*.

ABSTRACT

The successful television show *Idols* is set up around a talent competition where a large number of contestants compete to become the nation's next *Pop Idol*. Contestants are selected by expert judges and audience voting determines the competition's outcome. Scarce attention has yet been given to the influence of the contestants' personal characteristics on the outcome of the show. Based on findings from creativity research and career psychology, we explore what individual characteristics predict success within the Dutch *Idols* competition. A sample of audition contestants ($n = 369$) and contestants who entered the final rounds ($n = 27$) completed our survey. We conclude that successful contestants are characterized by higher levels of musical socialization and insecurity, lower levels of intrinsic motivation, more experience in performing, and a higher self-evaluation of appearance. We argue that the concept of 'preparedness' explains the majority of our findings: those contestants who survive the first selection rounds are not the ones that start from zero.

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the first series of *Pop Idol* was aired on the British channel ITV1 in 2001, *Idols* has been an extremely popular television format worldwide. The format was produced and aired in over thirty-five different countries (Fremantle Media, 2007). In their book on media and politics, Corner and Pels (2003, p. 1) substantially described the show's popularity and public fascination when they referred to the 2002 edition of the UK *Pop Idol*. In that year, the finale was watched by an audience of 15 million TV viewers and resulted in about 8.7 million phone votes. This massive audience appeal, spread out over various online and offline media, indicates a committed popular base that can do much for individuals participating in the *Idols* competition. Professional careers as a musician and singer for the participants is often the direct result of competing in this media phenomenon.

Although *Idols* has been the subject of academic analysis (e.g., Fairchild, 2004, 2007; Reijnders, Rooijackers, & Van Zoonen, 2007; Stahl, 2004), it is remarkable that its ability to boost individual careers was only briefly noted in general discussions of the show. Little or no attention has yet been given to the individual characteristics of *Idols* contestants. None of these studies raised the question: what are the specific factors that could influence the outcome of the contest? To our knowledge, this is the first study in which the *Idols* contestants themselves are the primary research subject. It is also the first in which direct access to these contestants was granted. The present study explores the influence of a set of individual characteristics on success in the *Idols* competition.

Being Successful in the Idols Competition

The *Idols* title and format has been appropriated by an assortment of different countries and languages.⁶ As a media phenomenon, the show can be seen as an example of a global franchise with high levels of standardization, much like the different globalized phenomena described by Bryman (2004) and Ritzer (2002). Indeed, many of the show's features can be defined in terms of the central elements of *McDonaldization* or *Disneyization*, such as efficiency, standardization, predictability, theming, and merchandise sale. However, our aim is not to present a content analysis of the show, so it suffices here to point out that in all different local contexts, the essence of the *Idols* format remains the same: a large number of contestants compete to become the winner of the show; that is, the nation's next 'pop idol'.

The show is set up with a series of selection rounds. In the first, 'cattle call'-style audition round, contestants give their first 'a cappella' performance in front of a jury consisting of music industry professionals.⁷ This jury selects a group of talented contestants who are given the opportunity to enter the second round of auditions. Through this process, the number of contestants is refined and reduced. In the third round, the 'workshop' round, the remaining

⁶ For instance, in Germany the show is called *Deutschland sucht den Superstar*, in France it is called *Nouvelle Star*, and in the U.S. it is simply called *American Idol*. Sometimes the setup of the show is slightly different. See: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idol_series for an overview of the different regional versions.

⁷ Cattle call is a popular term for this kind of mass auditions where a huge number of candidates are put together in one large room, like a herd, to await their audition call. During these very first auditions, the music industry jury as seen on television, is not present and participants are first selected by production company judges, see also Fairchild (2007, pp. 361–362) on these 'producer auditions'.

contestants receive special training and during this round they compete for the chance to further present themselves to the television audience during the 'live show' round. In this last round, the jury gives their professional opinion but the final decision of who stays or leaves the talent competition is based on viewer votes.⁸ Contestants with the lowest polled votes have to leave the competition. During the grand finale the contestant with the most votes wins the competition.

As Reijnders, Rooijackers and Van Zoonen (2007, pp. 284–86) suggest, an important element of the show is a modern version of the classic '*rite of passage*'. The finalists, in particular the winner of the competition, are transformed from the ordinary 'boy- or girl-next-door' into an emerging professional artist with a nationwide audience. The *Idols* television show and, as an essential part of the show, the desire for instant fame, can be seen as an example of what Virillio (2000, pp. 115–130) calls "the acceleration of reality". Within the show new artists are discovered and developed; moulded and fine-tuned to the audience's likings; popularized and marketed; and eventually discarded within a short time frame. The contestants themselves also believe in the possibility of instant fame, that is, the possibility of transforming from a zero into a hero. However, for the majority of the thousands of aspiring contestants, this promise is not materialized. Even for the select few that do make it into the final rounds of the show, the sustainability of their transformation remains to be seen. For all of the other contestants, instead of achieving the aspired fifteen minutes of fame, to use Andy Warhol's winged words, they are at most granted a mere thirty seconds.

Despite these odds, for a number of former Dutch *Idols* contestants their participation in the show has been the jumpstart of their professional careers as vocalists or performing artists. For example, the winner and the runner-up of the Dutch 2003 edition of *Idols*, Jamai Loman and Jim Bakkum, both had number one hits and are now successful musical performers. For the winner and runner-up of the 2004 edition, Boris Titulaer and Maud Mulder, *Idols* was the starting point for successful careers as performing vocalists. The same is true in other countries, such as in the U.K., where both the winner as well as the runner-up of the 2002 *Pop Idol* were among the biggest new pop phenomena with top-selling recordings (Frith, 2002). In the U.S., the 2002 winner Kelly Clarkson has become a commercially successful artist (Stahl, 2004). But even being among the last ten contestants can help launch a career according to British artist manager Bobby Poe (quoted in: Olsen, 2002). Therefore, in this study we consider attaining a place in the workshop round of *Idols* to be an important career achievement.

In order to be successful in the *Idols* competition, it is crucial for contestants to win both the jury's accolades and the audience's approval. However, it remains unclear what individual characteristics may increase or decrease a contestant's chance of being successful in the *Idols* competition (i.e., passing the audition rounds and entering the final workshop round). In the present study we will explore personal characteristics that have been found to influence career outcomes in other settings and we will find out what variables predict the chance of being a successful *Idols* contestant. With this study we hope to contribute to the field of career studies in the popular culture arena.

⁸ These viewer votes can be phoned in, or send in through text messaging, of course at special rates, adding to the show's commercial success.

The focus of our study was guided by two groups of earlier studies: career development research and musical/artistic development analysis. These studies have emphasized the importance of (1) musical socialization, (2) social support, (3) personality, (4) motivation and work ethic, (5) professional context and musical activities, and (6) self-evaluation (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Kogan, 2002; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005; Stahl, 2004; Stremikis, 2002; Top, 1993; Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009).

We will first elaborate on the findings from these and other related studies in relationship to the *Idols* setting before moving on to the results of the present study.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Musical Socialization and Social Support

During the *Idols* competition the contestants are judged on their musical talent. Thus, it seems rather obvious that we expect musical ability to be an important characteristic to success in a setting such as *Idols*. Several studies pointed out prime indicators of successful musical socialization. Musical experiences in early childhood, highly musical families and having had music lessons are positively connected to the development and growth of musical ability (Davidson et al., 1997; Howe & Davidson, 2003; Kogan, 2002; Sloboda, 1994; Stremikis, 2002; Woody, 1999).

Some of these studies also stressed the importance of social reinforcement and social support by family members and peers. Overall, they seem to show that people with higher levels of social support are more successful (Davidson et al., 1997; Kemp, 1997; Kogan, 2002; Sloboda, 1994; Woody, 1999). Moreover, in his study of *American Idol*, Stahl (2004, p. 225) notes the strong focus within the show on social support as a necessity for success.

Personality Traits, Motivation, and Work Ethic

With a number of notable exceptions (Gillespie & Myors, 2000; Kemp, 1996; Wills & Cooper, 1988; Woody, 1999), relatively few studies have studied the personality of popular musicians. However, none of these studies connect these findings on personality characteristics to career achievements. Within the career success literature, many studies have focused on the relationship between personality traits and career outcomes. In order to be successful in a certain type of work or employment environment, specific personality traits are required. This idea of a fit between work environment and personality type has been developed by scholars such as Holland (1985, 1996).

A personality typology that is often linked to career success is the so-called *Big Five*. This is a model of personality traits consisting of five dimensions: Extraversion, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, and Neuroticism (Goldberg, 1990, 1992). Several studies have found a relatively stable pattern of relations between these dimensions and career success. Extraversion and Conscientiousness are positively related to career success, whereas Neuroticism, and Agreeableness are negatively related to career success (Boudreau, Boswell, & Judge, 2001; Gelissen & de Graaf, 2006; Judge et al., 1999; Ng et al., 2005; Seibert & Kraimer, 2001; Soldz & Vaillant, 1999). With regard to Openness to Experience different studies showed contradictory findings. A meta-analysis by Ng et al. showed

indications of a positive influence on career success (Ng et al., 2005, pp. 387–88). However, most of the aforementioned studies concentrated on career outcomes within corporate institutions. It is less clear how these Big Five personality dimensions relate to career success within other, more creative professions. For example, in a discussion of the Introversion/Extraversion dimension among musicians, Kemp (1997, pp. 27–29) argues that although most musicians tend to be introverted, this introversion takes a different form to that of the general population and is usually a result of the musician's dedication to solitary practice. At the same time extraversion seems to be an important trait for performing purposes. We will explore the influence of these Big Five personality traits within the *Idols* competition.

Based on interviews with Dutch music industry professionals, Zwaan and Ter Bogt (2009) found that insecurity, perfectionism, perseverance and egoism were said to be important personality traits common to successful artists. These personality traits have therefore been included in this study. High levels of insecurity can also be indicative of performance anxiety, a trait often found in different kinds of musicians (Kemp, 1996, 1997). In combination with high levels of performance skills and frequent engagement in performance, performance anxiety can in fact facilitate successful performance (Hamann, 1985; Hamann & Sobaje, 1983; Lehrer, 1987).

In addition, high levels of motivation and work ethic were thought to be associated with musicians' career success. Musicians often have to face hard times throughout their careers due to issues such as income insecurity or negative reviews of their artistic work by critics. Their motivation and willingness to work hard is important to persevere and stay focused on their musical work (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009).

This finding is in line with a review of research on the careers of performing artists, in which a developmental model is presented of career determinants in different career phases. Kogan (2002, pp. 9–14) argues that especially during the phase of starting or first establishing a career in the performing arts, strong internal motivation is necessary to overcome hardships. Furthermore, in an empirical study of the career determinants of successful female musicians, Stremikis (2002, pp. 90–91) found that one of the factors all of her respondents had in common was a high level of motivation. Similarly, within the institutionalized careers of corporate executives, motivation is also a determinant of career success (Judge et al., 1995; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994). Consequently, considering this strong body of evidence, we expect motivation and work ethic to be influential within the *Idols* competition.

Musical Activities and Professional Context

One of the great strengths of the *Idols* format is that literally *anyone* within the age limits of 15 to 35 can sign up to participate⁹. For a lot of TV viewers this is one of the reasons to appreciate (or detest) the first audition round of the program (Bhat, 2007; Fairchild, 2007; Reijnders et al., 2007; Stahl, 2004). Due to this 'open to everyone' aspect during the first round, many of the *Idols* contestants have never before performed or even practiced for a performance. In contrast, the contestants that make their way into the final round of the show have often

⁹ In the 2005 edition of the Dutch *Idols* the upper age limit was raised from 26 to 36. This is different from the earlier editions and also differs from the age limits reported by Fairchild (2007) and Stahl, respectively 16–28 years for *Australian Idol* and 16–24 years for *American Idol*.

already been engaged in some sort of musical activity, as can be seen in the short biographical video clips through which the contestants are further introduced to the audience. We therefore assume that these respondents are better prepared compared to 'failing' contestants. Stahl (2004, p. 223) points out that preparedness, through training and self-evaluation, is an important merit on which *Idols* contestants are judged.

Indeed, several studies have shown that the amount of time spent on musical or artistic development positively affects the performer's work or performance (Davidson et al., 1997; Top, 1993). In addition, in an earlier study we found that musicians' professional networks are important for their career advancement (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). For that reason, we will also consider the influence of contestant's professional network and their level of professionalism.

Self-Evaluation

Career success is often divided into subjective career success, referring to subjective feelings of accomplishment and career satisfaction, and objective career success, which refers to objectively observable career accomplishments (e.g., remuneration, number of promotions). In many studies a relationship between these two dimensions of career success has been found. Respondents with higher levels of objective success, also score higher on subjective success measures (Judge et al., 1995; Judge et al., 1999; Ng et al., 2005).

Since these constructs were found to be conceptually distinct (Judge et al., 1995; Judge et al., 1999; Ng et al., 2005), we argue that the direction of this relationship can also be reversed: those who are more satisfied about their careers are better motivated to further invest time and energy in their work, resulting in higher levels of objective career success. This is especially the case for artistic careers in which career satisfaction is often based on external validation by others (e.g., the judge's opinion in *Idols*) which in turn can add to artistic production and achievement. We therefore expect subjective success to influence advancement within *Idols*.

As a result of the visual nature of television, as well as the commercial pop genre (Frith, 2002), *Idols* contestants are judged on their appearance and how they look on camera. This was most notably illustrated by the *Idols* producer's incitement to audition contestants to 'dress to impress' (see also: Fairchild, 2007). As Stahl (2004, p. 223) notes in regard to this, self-evaluation is of importance. Consequently, we have included a number of self-evaluative variables. These included the contestant's own assessment of their sexiness, which we found to be the most explicit measure of self-perceived appearance, their perceived recognition of their musical talent, and their future career expectations.

The Present Study

Research has shown that background, personality, professional context, and self-evaluation are important in predicting success. Within the setting of the *Idols* competition, it remains unclear which of these characteristics are *essential* in order to be a successful contestant. We aim to answer the following research question: what individual characteristics predict success within the Dutch *Idols* competition?

METHOD

Data Collection

Data collection was facilitated by Blue Circle, the producer of *Idols* in the Netherlands. While waiting for their audition call, *Idols* contestants were randomly selected by a team of researchers and asked to participate in this study. All of the auditions took place during four weekends, geographically spread throughout the Netherlands: Amsterdam for the north-westerly regions; Eindhoven and Dordrecht for the southern regions; and Zwolle for the north-eastern regions. This resulted in 369 completed surveys, approximately 10% of the total number of contestants at the auditions ($N=3608$).

During the first round of auditioning the number of competing contestants was brought down from 3608 to 89 contestants. This select group entered the second round of auditions, called the 'theatre' round, where contestants had to perform in trios, duos and alone. In this round, the number of contestants was further reduced to a total of 27 contestants. They entered the fourth 'workshop' round where they participated in singing and dancing classes and other workshops and had to perform several times in front of the television jury. These 27 remaining contestants were asked by Blue Circle staff to fill out the questionnaire, which resulted in 23 completed surveys, representing a response rate of 85%. This group included 11 out of the 13 contestants who performed live in front of a studio-audience during the final 'live show' round.

Measurements

The dependent variable in this study was being successful within the *Idols* competition. This was measured through group membership. Respondents were members of one of two groups. One group consisted of first round audition contestants ($n = 369$) who did not make it pass the first round of auditions, and a second group consisted of the contestants that were successful in the first and second audition rounds and had entered the workshop round ($n = 23$). This second group also included the finalists, i.e., those contestants who performed in the live show round.

With the exception of demographic variables, musical activities, and sexiness, all of the independent variables were measured using five-point Likert scales. Subjects indicated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the item statements, with answer options ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree*, to 5 = *strongly agree*. The item-scores for these scales were then averaged to form single-scale scores. An overview of number of items, the internal reliability statistic (Cronbach's α), and an item example for each of the scales included in this study can be found in Table 1.

Demographics

Age (in years), gender and educational level were included in the questionnaire. Education was measured using four comprehensive categories corresponding to the different levels in the Dutch educational system (1 = *pre-vocational or lower vocational*, 2 = *lower general secondary or middle vocational*, 3 = *upper general secondary or upper vocational*, and 4 = *pre-university or university*).

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Musical Socialization and Social Support

The scale *musical family* measures the degree to which the subject's families are engaged in music. The scale *social support* measures the amount of support subjects asserted they received from their peers, their mother and father, and other family members with answer options ranged from 1 = *No support at all* to 5 = *A lot of support*.

Personality Traits, Motivation, and Work Ethic

The original *Big Five* personality dimensions questionnaire was developed by Goldberg (1990, 1992) and used 20 markers per dimension. We have used the Dutch translation of the standardized, shortened version, developed by Gerris et al. (1998), a study by Gelissen and de Graaf (2006) showed that this shortened version is a valid representation of the original 20 markers. The scale *Perfectionism* measures the subject's self-oriented perfectionism and was derived from the original scale by Hewitt and Flett (1991), the items were translated into Dutch. The scale *Perseverance/egoism* measures the subject's devotion to music and their musical activities. In positive terms, this devotion can be seen as perseverance, on the other side of the coin, this devotion can have negative effects on friendships and other social relationships. The scale *Insecurity* measures the degree to which the subjects are insecure towards their work.

Motivation can be divided into *Extrinsic motivation*, relating to a type of motivation that is driven by external rewards, such as earnings; and *Intrinsic motivation*, a type of motivation which is driven by internal rewards, such as feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction. In addition, we identify *Extrinsic social motivation*, relating to external social rewards, such as recognition or appraisal. These subscales, originally developed by Juniu, Tedrick, and Boyd (1996), were translated into Dutch and appropriated to fit the musician's situation. The scale *Work ethic* measures the subject's attitude about the value of hard work and was based on the *Hard Work* subscale developed by Miller, Woehr, and Hudspeth (2002).

Musical Activities and Professional Context

The degree to which subjects were engaged in musical activities was measured by asking the subjects how many hours per week, on average, they spend on the following activities: listening to music, practicing or rehearsing, song writing, and performing. The range of answers to these questions varied from 0 to 16 hours per week (time spend performing) to 0 to 90 hours per week (time spend listening to music). In addition, respondents were asked to give their performance frequency ranging from 1 = *I never perform* to 10 = *More than 1 performance per week*.

The scale *Professionalism* measures the degree to which subjects perceive themselves as professional musicians. The scale *Marketing sense* measures the subject's notion of selling, or marketing their musical activities. The scale *Political knowledge of the music industry* measures the extent to which subjects think they have an understanding of the inner workings and organizational dynamics of the music industry. The four items were adapted from Chao et al. (1994) and appropriated to fit the context of the music industry. The scale *Networking* measures the degree to which subjects are engaged in actively seeking helpful relationships to progress in their musical careers.

Table 1. Overview of scales, Cronbach's α scores and item examples

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α ^a	Item example
<i>Musical family</i>	4	.78	"I come from a musical family."
<i>Social support</i>	4	.84	"How much support did you get from your friends?"
<i>Big 5: Conscientiousness</i> ^b	6	.85	"Organized"
<i>Big 5: Introversion</i> ^b	6	.76	"Withdrawn"
<i>Big 5: Agreeableness</i> ^b	6	.80	"Cooperative"
<i>Big 5: Openness to Experience</i> ^b	6	.73	"Imaginative"
<i>Big 5: Neuroticism</i> ^b	6	.71	"Irritable"
<i>Perfectionism</i> ^c	3	.66	"It makes me uneasy to see an error in my work."
<i>Perseverance/ egoism</i>	4	.68	"For music I will put everything else aside, even friendships."
<i>Insecurity</i>	3	.69	"I am always afraid that others will have a negative opinion about my work."
<i>Intrinsic motivation</i> ^d	3	.56	"I make music because it gives me a sense of creativity."
<i>Extrinsic motivation</i> ^d	2	.57	"I want to become a rich and famous musician."
<i>Extrinsic social motivation</i> ^d	3	.81	"I strive for recognition of the quality of my music by fellow-musicians."

Table 1. (Continued)

Scale	Number of items	Cronbach's α ^a	Item example
<i>Work ethic</i> ^e	5	.72	"Working hard is the key to being successful."
<i>Professionalism</i>	3	.78	"I see myself as a professional musician."
<i>Marketing sense</i>	3	.64	"I know how to sell my music."
<i>Political knowledge</i> ^f	4	.82	"I know who the most influential people in the music industry are."
<i>Networking</i>	3	.79	"I am engaged in networking activities to help my musical career progress."
<i>Subjective success</i> ^g	5	.78	"I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career."
<i>Recognition of talent</i>	2	.55	"Others see me as a talented musician."
<i>Positive future expectations</i>	2	.77	"In the coming years, my musical career will develop in a positive way."

Notes:

^a Cronbach's alpha is an indicator of the reliability or consistency of a scale. As a rule of thumb, Cronbach's alpha should be above .7. However the alpha value is sensitive to the number of items in the scale, for three item scales an alpha of .5 suffices (Briggs & Cheek, 1986; DeVellis, 1991).

^b Based on the original Dutch translation of the standardized, shortened version of the Big Five, developed by (Gerris et al., 1998).

^c Based on (Hewitt & Flett, 1991)

^d Based on (Juniu, Tedrick, & Boyd, 1996)

^e Based on (Miller, Woehr, & Hudspeth, 2002)

^f Based on (Chao, O'Leary-Kelly, Wolf, Klein, & Gardner, 1994)

^g Based on (Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Wormley, 1990)

Self-Evaluation

The scale *Subjective success* measures subjects' feelings of satisfaction about their careers, in this case their musical careers, this scale was derived from Greenhaus, Parasuraman, and Wormley (1990). The scale *Recognition of talent* measures the degree to which subjects feel their musical talent is recognized by their peers and others in general. The scale *Positive future expectations* measures the extent to which the subject's career expectations are positive. Finally, the subject's own assessment of their *Sexiness* was rated on a ten-point scale.

Strategy of analysis

Missing scores on items were replaced using the relative mean substitution, developed by Raaijmakers (1999). As shown in a study by Bernaards and Sijtsma (2000), this is a valid and reliable method for estimating missing values of Likert type scale scores. We examined the correlations among all variables, we performed diagnostic tests for collinearity, and no problems were found.

To find out which variables predict contestants' success in the *Idols* competition a forward stepwise logistic regression was performed, a procedure that is suitable for exploratory studies (for a further discussion of this method see: Field, 2005, p. 161). The benefit of the forward stepwise logistic regression is that the decision to include a variable in the model is based on whether the variable makes a significant contribution to the predictive power of the model. Furthermore, for each step, this procedure also checks for variables entered in the model that can be deleted without losing a significant amount of predictive power.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the descriptive results for all independent variables. The columns in Table 2 respectively represent the total sample, labeled *Total* ($n = 392$), the audition subsample, labeled *Audition* ($n = 369$), and the subsample of contestants that entered the workshop round, labeled *Workshop and Finale* ($n = 23$). This last group includes both those contestants who entered the Workshop round, but were 'eliminated' before the live show rounds (Workshop), as well as the group of contestants that eventually entered the live show rounds (Finale). As Table 2 shows, in the Workshop and Finale group, females were slightly over-represented. Also, contestants in this group were somewhat older than the contestants in the Audition group. With regard to education, contestants in the Workshop and Finale group tend to have slightly higher educational levels. The most striking result in Table 2 is the proportion of contestants that have had music lessons; in the last two rounds the vast majority (about 91%) of contestants had music lessons, whereas in the Audition group this is closer to a 60:40 ratio. Another remarkable finding is that Workshop and Finale contestants reported the experience of higher levels of social support. Furthermore, the Workshop and Finale contestants show a higher level of professionalism. This professionalism can also be noted from the difference in the pattern of time spent on musical activities, especially the number of hours spent on listening to music, which shows marked disparity between the two groups. Audition contestants spent more time listening to music than the Workshop and Finale group, whereas the latter group spent more time on performing, which is also visible in the difference in performance frequency.

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Finally, Workshop and Finale contestants report a higher rating of their own sexiness. However, Table 2 does not show the significance of these differences in relationship to all the other variables, for this we need to look at the logistic regression results.

Table 2. Descriptives, means (*M*) and standard deviation (*SD*) per group

Variable	Total <i>n</i> = 392 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Audition <i>n</i> = 369 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	Workshop & Finale <i>n</i> = 23 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Demographics			
Gender - Male	48%	48.5%	39.1%
Gender - Female	52%	51.5%	60.9%
Age in years (15-36)	22.34 (6.01)	22.14 (6.02)	25.30 (5.10)
Educational level (1-4)	2.44 (0.89)	2.43 (0.91)	2.70 (0.63)
Musical socialization			
Musical family	2.94 (0.98)	2.90 (0.97)	3.61 (0.90)
Music lessons - No	38.7%	40.7%	8.7%
Music lessons - Yes	61.3%	59.3%	91.3%
Social support			
Social support	3.69 (0.95)	3.66 (0.96)	4.08 (0.77)
Personality			
Big 5: Conscientiousness	3.24 (0.76)	3.25 (0.76)	3.05 (0.69)
Big 5: Introversion	2.33 (0.66)	2.34 (0.65)	2.19 (0.72)
Big 5: Agreeableness	4.02 (0.52)	4.02 (0.52)	4.05 (0.47)
Big 5: Openness	3.84 (0.55)	3.84 (0.56)	3.84 (0.41)
Big 5: Neuroticism	2.88 (0.62)	2.87 (0.62)	2.91 (0.55)
Perseverance / egoism	2.81 (0.77)	2.80 (0.78)	2.94 (0.63)
Insecurity	2.99 (0.78)	2.98 (0.78)	3.21 (0.80)
Perfectionism	3.46 (0.79)	3.44 (0.79)	3.74 (0.64)
Motivation			
Extrinsic social motivation	3.60 (0.87)	3.58 (0.88)	3.87 (0.48)
Extrinsic motivation	3.21 (0.91)	3.19 (0.90)	3.56 (0.87)
Intrinsic motivation	3.99 (0.70)	3.99 (0.70)	3.89 (0.63)
Work ethic	3.84 (0.60)	3.83 (0.61)	3.90 (0.57)
Musical activities in hours per week			
Listening to music (0-90)	27.19 (23.73)	27.58 (24.13)	20.96 (15.04)
Practicing (0-40)	7.33 (8.57)	7.42 (8.72)	5.88 (5.48)
Song writing (0-25)	1.97 (4.66)	2.01 (4.73)	1.19 (3.33)
Performing (0-16)	1.44 (3.15)	1.38 (3.09)	2.36 (3.93)

Table 2. (Continued)

Variable	Total	Audition	Workshop & Finale
	<i>n</i> = 392 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i> = 369 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>n</i> = 23 <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
Professional context			
Performance frequency (1-10)	4.18 (2.86)	4.06 (2.83)	6.09 (2.66)
Professionalism	2.85 (0.86)	2.82 (0.85)	3.36 (0.75)
Marketing sense	2.89 (0.72)	2.89 (0.73)	2.93 (0.49)
Political knowledge	2.49 (0.84)	2.49 (0.85)	2.47 (0.67)
Networking	2.73 (0.97)	2.71 (0.98)	3.05 (0.79)
Self-evaluative			
Subjective success	3.24 (0.68)	3.23 (0.69)	3.38 (0.53)
Recognition of talent	3.18 (0.71)	3.17 (0.72)	3.39 (0.43)
Sexiness (1-10)	6.56 (1.68)	6.51 (1.69)	7.45 (1.21)
Positive future expectations	3.48 (0.78)	3.45 (0.79)	3.85 (0.46)

Note: All variables were measured on 5-point scales unless otherwise indicated in parentheses.

The results of the logistic regression analysis are reported in Table 3. This table shows that the individual characteristics that can best predict success in the *Idols* competition are: coming from a musical family, having had music lessons, insecurity, intrinsic motivation, performance frequency and sexiness. The explained variance of this regression model based on Nagelkerke's R^2 is .31, indicating that these six independent variables can explain 31% of the found differences in success.

Table 3 also shows the ratio of the odds that the contestants who have a higher score on a particular characteristic are successful within the *Idols* competition. An odds ratio of 1 would indicate that the odds for a particular outcome are equal in both groups (Field, 2005, p. 739). We find that contestants coming from a musical family were 2.29 times more likely to be successful than respondents coming from a non-musical family (odds ratio = 2.29). Moreover, contestants who had followed music lessons (odds ratio = 5.52) were 5.52 times more likely to be successful. This is a strong indication that musical socialization is an important factor.

Although we expected to find a significant influence of the Big Five and a number of other personality traits on success, this was not the case. Insecurity turned out to be the only personality trait with significant influence in the regression. Contestants with a higher score on insecurity were more likely to be successful (odds ratio = 2.42). Those contestants with a higher level of intrinsic motivation, (i.e., those contestants who are driven by internal rewards to sing or make music), were less likely to be successful (odds ratio = 0.38).

The performance frequency of the contestants also proved to be of importance. Contestants who performed more often were more likely to be successful (odds ratio = 1.28). Finally, the contestants own assessment of their sexiness was significantly related to passing the auditions, those contestants who reported a higher level of attractiveness were more likely to be successful (odds ratio = 1.58).

Table 3. Factors associated with success in the *Idols* competition [odds ratios (OR) and 95% confidence intervals (CI)].

	B	SE B	β	OR	95 % CI for OR	
					Lower	Upper
Included ^a						
Constant	-10.13***	32.66	-4.86***	0.00	-	-
Musical family	0.83**	0.31	.81**	2.29	1.25	4.22
Music lessons	1.71*	0.80	1.71*	5.52	1.15	26.53
Insecurity	0.88*	0.37	.69*	2.42	1.18	4.99
Intrinsic motivation	-0.97*	0.43	-.68*	0.38	0.16	0.88
Performance frequency	0.24**	0.09	.70**	1.28	1.06	1.54
Sexiness	0.46**	0.18	.77**	1.58	1.12	2.24

Note: Forward stepwise logistic regression.

Model: $n = 316$, $\chi^2 = 39.96$, ($df = 6$), $p < .001$, Nagelkerke's $R^2 = .31$.

^a All other variables were not included in the model.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

The central aim of this study was to identify the individual characteristics that predict success within the Dutch *Idols* competition. Based on earlier findings in the fields of creativity research and career psychology we have explored the influence of a number of individual characteristics. Being successful within the *Idols* competition is defined as being among the *select group* of contestants that make it through the auditions. These contestants are the most visible during the largest part of the television series.

We find that contestants who come from musical families, who have had musical lessons, who are more experienced in performing, and who are more confident about their appearance, stand a better chance of being successful in the *Idols* competition. The notion of preparedness explains the majority of our findings: those who are best prepared have a higher chance to be successful in the competition.

This idea of 'being prepared' is also discussed by Stahl in his analysis of *American Idol*. He argues that humiliation is an important part of the show, and that this humiliation is largely due to the contestants being unprepared. Or, as he puts it: "The humiliation of the pretentious dramatizes the harsh punishments awaiting those who do not take training and self-evaluation upon themselves with sufficient seriousness" (Stahl, 2004, p. 223). When reversed, his point remains true: those who *do* take training and self-evaluation seriously, i.e., those who come prepared, stand a better chance of becoming successful.

Television is in essence a visual medium and the *Idols* producers explicitly stated in their invitation to the contestants to 'dress to impress' for their auditions. At a later stage in the competition, styling classes were part of the workshop training. Therefore it is not surprising to find that being aware and confident about one's sexual attractiveness turned out to be an important asset to succeed in the *Idols* competition.

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At first sight the finding that contestants with higher levels of insecurity have a better chance to be successful seems to be contradictory with the notion of preparedness. However, earlier studies showed that insecurity is a common trait among successful musicians. This insecurity is about the quality of their music, they always seem to doubt whether their music is good enough (Wills & Cooper, 1988; Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). Hence, in the case of the *Idols* contestants, we argue that a high level of insecurity indicates a high level of self-evaluation. The contestants who make it past the audition rounds do not think their performances are good enough but always strive to perform better.

Moreover, our results for insecurity in combination with the findings on musical socialization and performance frequency seem to support earlier research on performance anxiety. Research on performance anxiety shows that for more experienced and better trained musicians, performance anxiety can actually be facilitative in stressful situations (Hamann, 1985; Hamann & Sobaje, 1983; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Lehrer, 1987; Wills & Cooper, 1988). As mentioned above, the contestants in the Workshop and Finale group seem to fit this description, as they are better trained and more experienced. And, in the context of *Idols*, the auditions and performances are indeed stressful situations.

Our finding that contestants with higher levels of intrinsic motivation are less likely to be successful is at odds with earlier research. Kogan (2002, pp. 9–14), for example, argued that especially during the phase of starting or establishing a career in the performing arts, strong internal motivation is necessary to overcome hardships. Likewise, Stremikis (2002, pp. 90–91) found that successful female musicians showed high levels of motivation. A possible explanation why our findings are different is that both Kogan and Stremikis are referring to a different type of artist. In their studies, the musicians or performing artists had all followed formal artistic educational paths, started their careers in a more traditional way and, most important, were involved in ‘high culture’. In the present study, the group of *Idols* contestants, had generally not carefully planned a career as a musician, were unprepared to greet ‘instant fame’ and were involved in the field of pop music. In particular, these contestants were involved in a kind of pop music that is generally not taken seriously by culture critics. Stahl (2004, p. 217) notes that critics “argue that the music featured on the show is bland and derivative.” Furthermore, as this was the third *Idols* series in the Netherlands, most contestants were more or less aware of the media exposure involved in the *Idols* show. Some contestants were not ashamed to claim they enrolled for the auditions, simply because they saw it as a way to become famous. From this point of view, our findings with regard to motivation are not so surprising after all. It may be that for *Idols* contestants it is more important to have strong extrinsic and social motivation instead of intrinsic motivation.

Indeed, our results show higher levels of both extrinsic and extrinsic social motivation for the workshop and live show group when compared to the audition group. However, both variables were not included in the regression model, which indicates they were not the most important predictors for success. We can therefore make no unambiguous claims about the relationship between motivation and success in the *Idols* competition. The difference in motivational patterns for different kinds of musicians could prove to be a rewarding area for future research.

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Similar to extrinsic and social motivation, we have some indication that the two groups in our study differed with regard to specific characteristics not included in the regression model, most notably age, social support, perfectionism, and professionalism. Although these variables did not prove to be significant in the regression analysis, the observed differences were in line with our expectations. This is an indication that there can be a certain relationship between age, social support, perfectionism and professionalism on career success.

Limitations

One possible limitation of this study is a logistical problem: the two groups of contestants were approached at different points in time. The second group, consisting of the Workshop and the Finale contestants, were asked to cooperate only after they had passed the audition rounds. This setup was chosen for practical reasons, as our measurement of success within *Idols* depends on passing the audition rounds. This setup could, at least partially, be the cause for some of the differences between the audition and the live show group.

A second possible limitation of this study is that it only takes into account the individual characteristics of the contestants. It is plausible that external factors are relevant in explaining the differences in success, especially since this is largely determined by others, in this case the jury and the audience votes. However, as we were not granted access to either the jury reports or the viewer votes, we could not include these into our research design. In future research such a multi-actor approach would be desirable.

CONCLUSION

The promise of the *Idols* talent quest is characterized by the tantalizing possibility that an average 'John or Jane Doe' could become the nation's next pop star. Reijnders, Rooijackers and Van Zoonen, talk about this as a classic *rite of passage*: the contestants transform from being 'ordinary humans' into pop idols (Reijnders et al., 2007, pp. 284–86). In other analyses of the show, this transformation was described as 'character development' or 'brand development'. Stahl (2004, pp. 220–221) talks about 'character development' because, during the show, through a number of short biographical video clips, the unknown contestants are introduced to the audience as 'authentic individuals' much like the character development in a fictional story. Fairchild (2007, pp. 357–358) mentions 'brand development' because the unknown contestant is slowly turned into a credible, marketable product. He argues that it is exactly this ongoing 'brand development' of the *Idols* contestants combined with the massive amount of publicity through various media that makes the show so successful in launching new artists in the 'attention economy'.

Although these different views on the personal development of the contestants are all legitimate claims in their own right, we would argue that those contestants that make it to the last rounds of the contest are *not* the ones that start from zero. The contestants that become most visible throughout the last part of the contest are the ones who come prepared and who already have invested in training and are more experienced performers. So, although the possibility of instant fame is a very tempting feature of the *Idols* competition, this study has proven that success demands hard work. In other words: in the *Idols* TV show, a Zero cannot become a Hero.

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CHAPTER 3

SO YOU WANT TO BE A ROCK 'N' ROLL STAR? CAREER SUCCESS OF POP MUSICIANS IN THE NETHERLANDS*

* This chapter is based on: Zwaan, K., ter Bogt T.F.M., Raaijmakers, Q.A.W. (2009). So You Want to be a Rock 'n' Roll Star? Career Success of Pop Musicians in the Netherlands. *Poetics*, 37(3), 250–266.

ABSTRACT

Empirical research on the career development of pop musicians is scarce. In the present study three sets of factors that have been posited to determine musicians' career achievement were tested: background characteristics, personal attributes and the professional environment of pop musicians. A group of aspiring professional Dutch pop musicians (N = 340) responded to online questionnaires. Regression analysis showed that social support and a professional attitude were positively associated with career success, and conscientiousness negatively. Most important, the professional context, i.e., having a website dedicated to the musician or act, and having access to professionals in the music industry, emerged as the strongest predictors of career success. Surprisingly, we found that self-perceived musical talent was not linked to career success. The limitations of our study and implications for future research are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

A number of themes are regularly addressed in vocational research on professional musicians: first, the physical and psychological problems associated with musicianship (e.g., Gabrielsson, 1999, 2003; Steptoe, 1989); secondly, the personality of musicians (e.g., Dyce and O'Connor, 1994; Gillespie and Myers, 2000; Kemp, 1996); thirdly, the development of musical talent and performance skills (e.g., Davidson et al., 1996, 1997) and finally, the live music performance (e.g., Gabrielsson, 1999, 2003). In these studies it is commonly acknowledged that becoming, or being, a professional pop musician is characterized by high career uncertainty and that the profession, though potentially glamorous, can be stressful (Cooper and Wills, 1989; Gabrielsson, 2003; Janssen, 2001; Kemp, 1996). Though aspects of musicianship and performing have been researched thoroughly, the process of becoming a professional musician has attracted far less attention, that is, empirical research on the career development of musicians is scarce. In this study we will explore potential determinants of career accomplishments of pop musicians. For this purpose we conducted a cross-sectional survey among a group of young, (semi-) professional Dutch pop musicians.

Defining career success

Success as a musician or, more broadly, as an artist, is a multi-dimensional concept that has been defined and investigated in rather different ways. Some scholars have focused on aesthetic success and studied criteria such as inclusion of compositions in reference works on music, or ratings on aesthetic significance by experts or critics (Kozbelt, 2005; Simonton, 1986). A different yet related way of understanding success is to look at the reputation of the artist, as was first proposed by Howard Becker in his classic work on artistic production: *Art Worlds* (1982). Becker acknowledged that reputational value can be translated into financial value, reputation then becomes the foundation of economic success (Becker, 1982: 23). In studies that take up Becker's approach, the reputation of an artist is, again, assessed or estimated by experts or critics (e.g., Beckert and Rössel, 2004). These two approaches to success are both highly relevant to the study of artistic production and artists' career development, but they are not suited for investigating career patterns of aspiring professional musicians. Measuring success through reputation or aesthetic value is a suitable method for established artists but inappropriate for starting musicians, the focus of the current research project, as they are still building their reputation and in the process of getting acknowledged by experts and critics.

In measuring career success, we adopted an approach from career psychology research. Within this field, it is common to distinguish between subjective and objective career success. Subjective career success is defined as the individual's feelings of accomplishment and satisfaction with one's career. Objective career success is defined as objectively observable career accomplishments such as salary or the number of promotions within a company (Judge et al., 1995, 1999; Ng et al., 2005). In this study we will focus on objective success, measured through the career achievements of musicians. Several authors in the field of popular music studies have noted that musicians, or their musical products, are in contact with their audiences in three ways: through media exposure, sales of their recordings and live performances (e.g., Frith, 1988; Longhurst, 2007; Shuker, 2001; Toynebee, 2000). These

also represent the three most important ways for musicians to gain an income with their musical activities. Hence, in this study we will use measures of media exposure, frequency of performing and music sales as indicators of objective career success.

Possible correlates of career success

Empirical studies within the field of career psychology have examined the degree to which background and demographic variables, intrapersonal variables, organizational and contextual variables relate to career success. Studies have shown relatively consistent findings regarding the relationship of demographic variables with career success. Overall, gender was found to be related to success, as women often experience lower levels of career success than men, while age and educational level were found to be positively related to success (Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005). In addition, being married was positively related to success. The relationship of marital status with career success is commonly explained by the assumption that married individuals are more stable and responsible than singles, making them more favourable job candidates (Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005; Pfeffer and Ross, 1982). In addition, several studies showed a positive association of social support with career outcomes (Feldman and Ng, 2007; Harris et al., 2001; Parasuraman et al., 1996).

With regard to personality traits, the Big Five personality dimensions have often been studied in relation to career success. These dimensions are Conscientiousness (being organized and responsible), Extraversion (being outgoing and energetic), Agreeableness (being kind or sympathetic), Openness to Experience (being curious and imaginative), and Neuroticism (being anxious or tense). Several authors found a relatively stable pattern of relations between these personality dimensions and career success: Conscientiousness and Extraversion were positively related, whereas Agreeableness and Neuroticism were negatively related to career success (Boudreau et al., 2001; Gelissen and De Graaf, 2006; Judge et al., 1999; Ng et al., 2005; Seiber and Kraimer, 2001; Soldz and Vaillant, 1999). With regard to Openness to Experience different studies yielded contradictory findings, a meta-analysis by Ng et al. (2005) showed indications of a positive correlation with career success.

It is important to note that most of the aforementioned studies concentrated on career outcomes within large organizations, often studying managerial level functions within hierarchic corporations. It is less clear how these variables are related to career success within different kinds of professions such as, in this study, that of pop musician.

Although empirical research on pop musician's career success is scarce, there are a small number of studies that are related to the present study and we will therefore consider whether findings from these studies can also be related to career success. With regard to personality, performance anxiety is found to be a common trait among different kinds of musicians (Hamann, 1985; Hamann and Sobaje, 1983; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Lehrer, 1987). Although this would appear as an impeding trait, in combination with high levels of performance skills and frequent engagement in performance, performance anxiety can in fact facilitate successful performance (Hamann, 1985; Hamann and Sobaje, 1983; Lehrer, 1987). Performance anxiety has also been related to perfectionism: because perfectionists set themselves high standards they may experience higher levels of internal pressure (Flett and Hewitt, 2002; Stoeber and Eismann, 2007). In a study among musically talented high school

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students in Germany (Stoeber and Eismann, 2007), perfectionism was related to musical achievement. We will explore if perfectionism is also directly related to measures of objective career success. In addition, we assume that perseverance is associated with musicians' career success. Pop musicians often have to face hard times throughout their careers (e.g., income insecurity, negative reviews of their artistic work by critics). Kogan (2002) argues that especially during the phase of establishing a career, perseverance is necessary to overcome these occupational hardships.

In a study based on interviews with record industry key decision makers, Zwaan and ter Bogt (2009) found that a number of characteristics were mentioned to be common among successful musicians. These included perseverance, professional attitude, perfectionism, authenticity, musical skills and musical talent, characteristics that are expected to positively affect career success. The study also discussed the importance of musical education and musical socialization. In addition, having access to a professional network and social support were said to be important for musician's career advancement (Zwaan and ter Bogt, 2009). We will consider these findings and their connection to the career success of musicians.

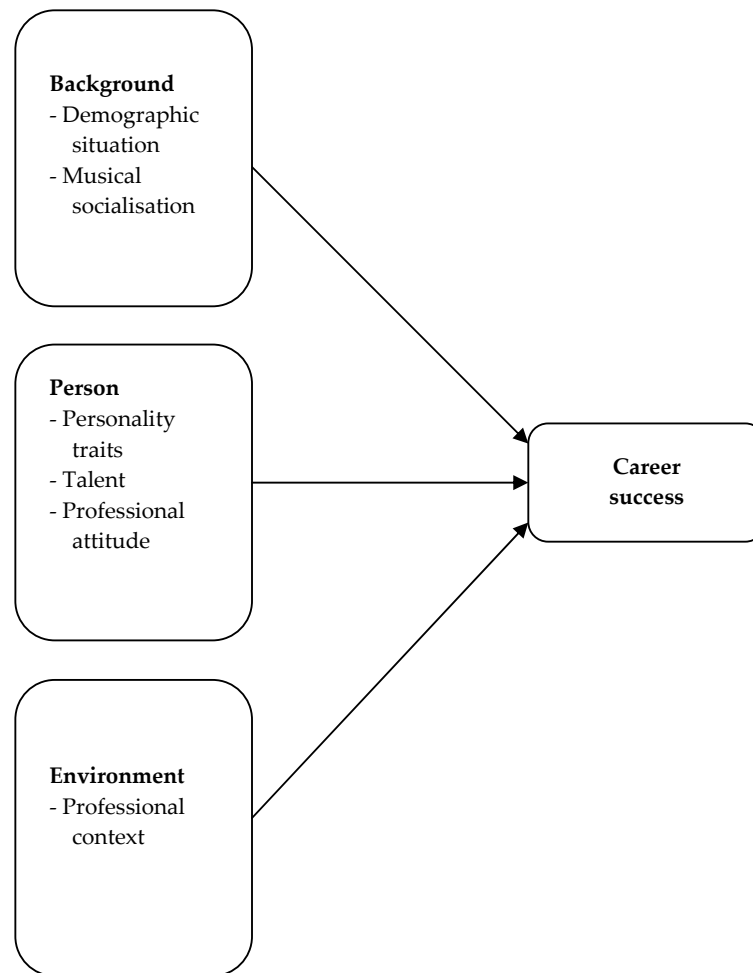


Fig. 1. Schematic overview of our research strategy: three categories of possible determinants of career success are tested in our study.

Research strategy

In her elaborate review of research on artistic careers, Janssen (2001) notes that some studies have focused on background or personality traits while not considering the influence of social and institutional contexts, whereas other studies that did focus on the contextual influences often neglected the importance of background and personality. Janssen therefore calls for a comprehensive research strategy that takes into account the different variables affecting artists' career development. In related research fields there are some examples of studies that do include both intrapersonal and environmental determinants, such as the model of career development in the performing arts (Kogan, 2002; Kogan and Kangas, 2006); or the Differentiated Model of Giftedness and Talent (DMGT, see Gagné, 1995, 1999). Although these studies do not specifically focus on career success of popular musicians, they do offer some guidance in the development of a research strategy of the determinants of career success. The most important contribution of these models is the incorporation of both intrapersonal and contextual factors. In this study, we will explore a range of background, personality, and contextual variables and their connection to career success. For this study we propose the following research strategy: As Figure 1 above shows, we expect that several categories of predictor variables (background, person, and environment) are related to the level of career success.

METHODS

Sample

Respondents were approached in collaboration with a number of organizations in the Dutch pop music field that either provided us with names and addresses or sent out a call through their mailing list or website. These included three national organizations: the *Dutch Pop and Rock Institute (Nationaal Pop Instituut)*,¹⁰ the *Grand Prize of the Netherlands (Grote Prijs van Nederland)*,¹¹ and the pop musician's labour union *FNV-KIEM BV Pop*. In addition, four regional pop organizations (*GRAP*, Amsterdam; *PopUnie*, Zuid-Holland; *BRAM/BrabantPop*, Noord-Brabant; and *Groverpop*, Groningen) assisted in the approach of respondents. These organizations represent two areas within the Randstad, the urbanized centre of the Netherlands, which includes the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, and two areas outside of the Randstad (the provinces of Groningen and Noord-Brabant). Lastly we approached students from the *Rock Academy* in Tilburg, which is the first professional education institute for pop musicians in the Netherlands.

The primary objective was to include individuals who could be described as starting musicians with an aspiration to become professional musicians. An age limit was set at 16, which is the minimum age in the Netherlands to earn money from public performances on a

¹⁰ The *Dutch Pop and Rock Institute (Nationaal Pop Instituut)* is now part of the *Music Centre the Netherlands (MCN)*. This organization promotes Dutch music in the Netherlands and abroad and is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Culture. One of their activities is publishing the monthly magazine *FRET* which features reviews of demos from unsigned bands.

¹¹ The *Grand Prize of the Netherlands (Grote Prijs van Nederland)* is the biggest national popular music talent competition and consists of four genre divisions, Pop/Rock, Singer/Songwriter, Dance and Hip Hop/R&B.

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regular basis. An upper limit for age was set at 35 as the chances of career mobility decrease rapidly after this age (Menger, 1999). The age mean (M) was 25.1 years ($SD = 4.7$). Our second inclusion criterion holds that the musician was not yet an established artist on a national level, but there was a provable commitment to a professional career. This commitment could be, for example, membership of the musician's labour union, participation in the national talent competition, or sending in a demo for review in the magazine of the Dutch pop and rock institute.

With the help of the organizations mentioned above, 363 acts¹² were approached and asked to participate. This resulted in a sample of 358 musicians¹³ Most of these respondents were active in more than one act. A small group of 27 respondents who were active in only one act 'shared' this act with one or more respondents who also had no other acts. Thus, the musical careers of these respondents were based on the same act. To avoid the possibility of dependent measurement, 18 out of the 27 respondents were randomly removed from the database. Therefore, the final number of respondents (N) included in this study was 340, representing a broad range of backgrounds, genres, and regions. These respondents were active in no less than 647 different acts ($M = 2$, $SD = 1.1$). Appendix A shows three tables displaying the frequencies of number of acts per respondent, the role they have within their acts (vocals and/or musical instrument) and musical genres in which the respondents categorized their own music.

Measurements

The musicians responded to online questionnaires, including questions about their personal background, demographic situation, musical socialization, social context, personality, musical activities, and professional context. All independent variables, except for the categorical variables gender, education, partner, website and professional network, were measured using five-point Likert type scale items. The item scores were averaged to obtain single scale scores. An overview of the scale items developed by the authors (*Social support, Perseverance, Professionalism, Networking, and Authenticity*) can be found in Appendix B.

Objective Career Success

The dependent variable in this study, *Objective career success*, was measured using four items regarding objectively observable career accomplishments over the past 12 months. These included *national radio airplay, national television airplay, CD sales, and performance frequency*. These accomplishments represent the three main career dimensions (media coverage, sales of recordings and live performance) central to career success in pop music as discussed in the introduction.

¹² Acts refers to all the different types of formations common in popular music, these can range from solo projects by singer-songwriters or dance-DJs, to duo's and larger groups such as bands, rap crews, or any other kind of musical collaboration. We prefer to use the term 'acts' as this term has no connotations to any specific musical genre.

¹³ In most cases the individual respondent was the person who was listed as the contact or spokesperson of the approached act. In some cases this resulted in multiple respondents from the same act.

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National radio airplay measured the average amount of plays of the respondent's music on national radio within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = 0 plays to 10 = more than 50 plays. *National television airplay* measured the average amount of plays of the respondent's music on national TV within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = 0 plays to 10 = more than 50 plays. *CD sales* measured the number of CDs sold in the past 12 months ranging from 1 = 0 CDs sold to 6 = more than 1000 CDs sold. *Performance frequency* measured the average amount of performances within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = once per year to 8 = more than once per week.

Factor analysis (PCA) of the standardized item scores resulted in one latent construct with item loadings ranging from .65 to .83. Hence, a composite scale score was computed as the mean value of the four separate scale item values. The resulting score was sufficiently reliable (Cronbach's alpha: .73). As the distribution of this score was positively skewed (skewness statistic of 1.48), the scores were transformed using the log transformation.

Background Variables

Four variables referred to the respondents' demographics: *gender*, *age*, the musician's *educational level*, and whether the respondents had a *partner*.

Educational level was measured using a range of categories corresponding to the different levels in the Dutch educational system these categories were recoded into three comprehensive categories (1 = low, 2 = middle, 3 = high).

Social support measures the amount of experienced social support as indicated by four items ($\alpha = .82$).

Musical education was measured by two dichotomous variables: whether respondents had followed *music lessons* and whether they had *conservatory* education (including comparable professional education such as the Rock academy). A third variable with regard to musical socialization, *Performance experience*, measured the number of years that respondents were involved in public performances.

Intrapersonal Variables

The *Big Five* personality dimensions were measured using the Dutch translation of the standardized, shortened version developed by Gerris et al. (1998) using six items per dimension. Gelissen and De Graaf (2006) showed that this shortened version is a valid representation of the original questionnaire with 20 markers per dimension. The six items of each separate subscale were averaged to obtain single-scale scores: *Conscientiousness* ($\alpha = .87$), *Introversion* ($\alpha = .88$), *Agreeableness* ($\alpha = .85$), *Openness to Experience* ($\alpha = .80$), and *Neuroticism* ($\alpha = .80$).

Perseverance measures the subject's devotion to his or her musical activities. This scale contains four items ($\alpha = .72$).

Perfectionism measuring the subject's self-oriented perfectionism was derived from the original scale developed by Hewitt and Flett (1991) and translated into Dutch. This scale consists of three items ($\alpha = .50$).

Professionalism measures whether subjects perceived themselves as professional musicians, the scale consists of three items ($\alpha = .69$).

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Networking contains three items ($\alpha = .75$) and measures the degree to which subjects are engaged in actively seeking helpful relationships to progress in their musical careers.

Authenticity, consisting of three items ($\alpha = .63$), measures the degree to which subjects perceive their own musical products to be unique and authentic.

Self-perceived talent measures the subject's own perception of their musical talent, based on frames of reference related to their fellow musicians, this scale is based on the comparative subscale of self-perceived talent developed by Watt (2004) and consists of three items ($\alpha = .73$).

Professionalism, networking, authenticity and talent are primarily attitudinal measures, based on self-evaluation, and are accordingly categorized as intrapersonal variables.

Environment Variables

Five dichotomous items were used to measure the subject's professional status: whether subjects had a *website* based around the subject's musical activities, and whether subjects were represented by a *manager*, a *booking agency*, a *record company*, and/or a *music publisher* (response categories: 0 = *no* and 1 = *yes*). Factor analysis showed that these last four items (manager, booking agency, record company, and music publisher) were indicative of the same latent construct. Therefore, the response values of these items were summed to obtain a 5 point scale score, measuring the width of their *Professional Network*, with scores ranging from 0 (*no professional network*) to 4 (*complete professional network*). Reliability of this scale is .57, as indicated by the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (or KR–20, the measure of internal consistency reliability for dichotomous measures).

Strategy of Analysis

In order to find which of the independent variables could best explain the differences in career success, we conducted a hierarchical multiple regression. The different variables were entered in the regression analysis in a fixed order: first, the background variables were entered, next the intrapersonal variables, and finally the environment variables.

RESULTS

Descriptives

Male musicians were over-represented in our sample (73.5%). This is likely because there are more males in the total population of pop musicians. Two recent studies (van Bork, 2008; IJdens et al., 2009) on popular musicians in the Netherlands presented similar results with regard to gender distribution. A majority of respondents (63.2%) indicated to have a relationship. The educational level of the respondents was evenly distributed with 21.8% of the respondents having a low education, about half of the sample (52.9%) having a middle educational level, and about a quarter of the sample (25.3%) having a high educational level. Most respondents (79.9%) had followed music lessons and about a quarter (25.3%) had also followed professional education such as conservatory or the rock academy. A majority (77%) reported having a website based on their musical activities. Table 1 shows the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of the variables in this study.

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Table 1. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations of study variables (N = 340).

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Objective success	-0.12	0.38	–							
2. Female	0.26	0.44	-.18**	–						
3. Age	25.11	4.74	.08	-.20**	–					
4. Education	2.04	0.69	.12*	-.03	.16**	–				
5. Partner	0.63	0.48	.16**	-.04	.21**	.02	–			
6. Social support	3.49	0.90	.30**	-.01	-.09	-.07	.10	–		
7. Music lessons	0.79	0.40	-.02	.14*	.09	.14**	.01	.06	–	
8. Conservatory	0.25	0.44	.13*	.17**	-.05	.08	.04	.16**	.24**	–
9. Experience	7.47	4.73	.18**	-.05	.53**	.16**	.14**	.04	.16**	.17**
10. Conscientiousness	3.18	0.78	-.20**	.13*	-.01	-.16**	-.09	.04	.02	.03
11. Introversion	2.33	0.79	-.07	-.24**	.04	.15**	-.11*	-.15*	-.08	-.02
12. Agreeableness	4.03	0.49	-.08	.07	.03	-.17**	-.06	.16**	-.02	-.01
13. Openness	4.06	0.53	-.09	.09	.01	-.12*	-.03	-.05	-.01	.00
14. Neuroticism	2.78	0.71	-.08	.07	-.00	.02	-.10	-.09	-.04	-.04
15. Perfectionism	3.55	0.70	.04	.02	-.09	-.11*	-.12*	.06	-.04	.05
16. Perseverance	3.16	0.81	.08	.02	-.19**	-.16**	-.18**	.03	-.00	.07
17. Professionalism	3.51	0.78	.28**	-.01	-.02	-.10	-.03	.18**	-.02	.24**
18. Networking	3.53	0.88	.31**	-.18**	-.06	.03	.05	.27**	-.02	.19**
19. Authenticity	3.05	0.73	-.04	-.07	.04	.00	-.01	.01	-.05	-.03
20. Self-perc. talent	3.29	0.68	.17**	-.04	.07	-.08	.03	.12*	.04	.15**
21. Website	0.77	0.42	.43**	-.20**	.20**	.20**	.16**	.09	.06	.02
22. Prof. network	0.81	1.06	.46**	-.09	.02	.01	.14**	.22**	-.02	.13*

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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Table 1. (Continued)

	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1													
2													
3													
4													
5													
6													
7													
8													
9	–												
10	.01	–											
11	-.09	-.05	–										
12	.06	.23**	-.31**	–									
13	.10	.17**	-.29**	.41**	–								
14	-.13*	-.10	.40**	-.19**	-.01	–							
15	-.03	.27**	-.08	.23**	.26**	.08	–						
16	-.03	.03	-.14*	.15**	.24**	-.01	.33**	–					
17	.10	.11*	-.20**	.17**	.37**	-.01	.34**	.48**	–				
18	.04	-.01	-.16**	.10	.07	-.12*	.14*	.23**	.41**	–			
19	-.04	.06	-.01	.16**	.35**	.04	.15**	.21**	.27**	.10	–		
20	.19**	.13*	-.09	.11*	.31**	-.02	.20**	.33**	.53**	.19**	.24**	–	
21	.15**	-.11*	.08	-.11	-.13*	-.07	-.05	-.01	.07	.20**	-.07	.06	–
22	.22**	-.11*	-.07	-.03	.01	-.03	.10	.09	.30**	.31**	-.07	.16**	.23**

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

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Regression Analysis

Table 2 shows the results of the second step in our analysis, that is, the hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Each different step in this regression analysis significantly contributed to the amount of explained variance, as indicated by the significant R^2 increase ($ps < .001$) and

Table 2. Hierarchical regression analysis for variables predicting objective career success ($N=340$)

	Step 1			Step 2			Step 3		
	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	β
Constant	-.67	.15		-.35	.28		-.40	.26	
<i>Background</i>									
Gender (0 = male)	-.15	.05	-.17**	-.10	.05	-.11*	-.07	.04	-.08
Age	.00	.01	-.03	.00	.01	.02	.00	.00	.00
Education	.07	.03	.12*	.06	.03	.11*	.04	.03	.07
Partner (0 = no)	.09	.04	.11*	.07	.04	.09	.03	.04	.03
Social support	.12	.02	.27***	.09	.02	.22***	.07	.02	.17***
Music lessons (0 = no)	-.07	.05	-.07	-.05	.05	-.05	-.05	.04	-.05
Conservatory (0 = no)	.08	.05	.09	.01	.05	.01	.03	.04	.03
Experience	.01	.01	.14*	.01	.01	.10	.00	.00	.04
<i>Person</i>									
Conscientiousness				-.09	.03	-.18***	-.07	.02	-.14**
Introversion				-.02	.03	-.04	-.04	.03	-.07
Agreeableness				-.06	.04	-.08	-.04	.04	-.05
Openness to Experience				-.08	.04	-.10	-.06	.04	-.08
Neuroticism				-.02	.03	-.04	-.01	.03	-.02
Perfectionism				.03	.03	.05	.02	.03	.03
Perseverance				.00	.03	.00	.00	.03	.00
Professionalism				.11	.03	.23**	.07	.03	.15*
Networking				.05	.02	.12*	.02	.02	.04
Authenticity				-.04	.03	-.08	-.02	.03	-.03
Self-perceived talent				.03	.03	.05	.02	.03	.04
<i>Professional context</i>									
Website (0 = no)							.25	.04	.28***
Professional network							.09	.02	.25***

Note: $R^2 = .18$ for step 1; $\Delta R^2 = .13$ for step 2 and $.12$ for step 3 ($ps < .001$).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

the final step of the analysis explained about 39% of the total variance (Adjusted $R^2 = .39$, $R^2 = .43$). We tested for multicollinearity and despite several relatively strong correlations between the predictors, no problems of collinearity were observed (i.e., all Tolerance values $>.20$ and all values of variance inflation factors <2).

Considering the β -values, the overall association of the professional context variables with success appeared relatively strong compared to the background or intrapersonal variables. In addition, the relatively large increase in explained variance (ΔR^2 of $.12$) by these two variables, demonstrated the importance of the professional context variables.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore the associations of the background characteristics, personal attributes and the professional context of a group of musicians with their career success. To our knowledge, this is the first large-scale study to investigate the career outcomes of pop musicians using a comprehensive research strategy. Because of the exploratory nature of this study, a relatively large number of variables was included in the analysis. For some of the predictor variables, such as gender and the Big Five, earlier research findings in the field of career psychology have shown significant and relatively consistent associations with career success (Judge et al., 1995, 1999; Ng et al., 2005). However, these results were often based on studies within corporate organizations, and it was unclear if these findings could be generalized to other professions, such as in this case, that of the pop musician. Other variables in this study were taken from studies on the personality of musicians (Kemp, 1996, 1997; Kogan, 2002; Stoeber and Eismann, 2007) and had not been directly related to career success in previous research.

For the background variables, we found positive associations of gender, educational level and having a partner with career success indicating that the more successful musicians were more often male, had higher educational levels and did more often have a partner. In addition, we explored musical socialization (i.e., whether respondents had followed music lessons, conservatory education and performance experience) as well as social support. Performance experience was positively associated with career success, which implies that the more successful musicians had more experience in performing. Also, we found a significant and strong positive correlation for social support with career success, indicating that in order to be successful it is important to receive support from important others, such as family members, partner and peers. These findings on the musician's background are in line with our expectations and earlier research findings (e.g., Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005). However, when controlling for all other variables in this study, only one background variable, social support, remained significantly associated with career success, demonstrating that this association is persistent when controlling for all other variables.

As Woody (1999) stated, an important omission in research on the career development of musicians is the relationship between personality and career success. In this study, we explored the association of a number of personality traits and other personal attributes with career success. With regard to the Big Five personality traits our findings differed considerably from previous research findings. We found no significant associations for Extraversion, Agreeableness, Openness to Experience, or Neuroticism with career success. Moreover, contrary to earlier studies we found a significant negative association of Conscientiousness with career success. Whereas, for other occupations, being well organized and well planned is an important trait to be successful (Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005), our study shows that for musicians this is not the case. Rather, the opposite of being conscientious, which can be described as being sloppy and not well planned, or in positive terms, being spontaneous and flexible, was more important to be successful. This finding remained significant when controlling for all other variables. Although spontaneity and flexibility conceptually seem to relate to Extraversion, we did not find any significant association of Extraversion with career success.

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In addition to the Big Five, we explored the relationship of perfectionism, perseverance, professionalism, networking, authenticity and self-perceived talent with career success. Contrary to our expectations, we found no significant associations with success for perfectionism, perseverance, and authenticity. Apparently, neither of these characteristics was directly related to career success. We found that professionalism, networking and talent were significantly and positively correlated to career success, suggesting that the more successful musicians were actively involved in networking, had a more professional attitude, and regarded themselves as talented. However, when controlling for all other variables in the regression analysis, only professionalism remained a significant predictor of career success. For talent, based on the correlations, we found that musicians who scored high on self-perceived talent were also more often engaged in networking and had a professional attitude, and these proved to be stronger predictors of career success. Regarding networking, a possible explanation is that, rather than the musician's attitude towards networking, actually having a professional network is much more strongly and more directly related to career success.

Finally, we found significant and relatively high positive correlations for having a website and the breadth of the musician's professional network with career success, demonstrating that those musicians who have invested in a website and who have many professional connections are more successful. Furthermore, in the regression analysis both having a website and professional context were significant predictors of career success when controlling for all other variables. These findings are in line with our expectations and, once more, point towards the importance of the musician's professional context.

Based on our findings we conclude that when investigating the level of career success of musicians, their background, personality as well as their professional context should be taken into account as all of these were significantly related to career success. The strategy we proposed may prove to be valuable in further studies on pop musicians' career success and can also be used to study career success in other creative professions. We suggest that this strategy could provide a framework for studying the specific background, intrapersonal and professional context characteristics that are important in certain artistic careers. In the particular case of the pop musician, we argue that although background, and personality *do* matter, the most important category of career success predictors is the professional context.

Musicians who are connected to important intermediaries such as a manager or a booking agent are more successful. These intermediaries are important for the career development of musicians because they have access to a larger network of professionals in various parts of the music industry; including record companies, music media, the concert industry and music retail. In a way, when represented by these intermediaries, musicians are given a 'stamp of approval' that can help them gain access to the next step forward in their careers. The musician's professional network could be theorized as an approximation of the musician's reputation, since this reputation is largely determined by the reputation of the professionals that represent him or her. For example, if a musician is represented by a very well known and respected management agency, this may have consequences for the career possibilities of this musician. Our study provides support for the idea that it is important to know the right people to help you advance in your career. In other words: it is not only important who you *are*, but it is equally important who you *know*.

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In recent years, a number of educational institutions providing professional education for musicians were established in the Netherlands. Part of their curriculum is knowledge of the music industry and skills for networking and marketing. Likewise, Dutch music organizations, such as *Music Centre the Netherlands*, *Buma Cultuur* and Dutch musicians' unions also offer workshops on professional skills such as networking. Our study shows that these kinds of initiatives could indeed help to further the careers of individual musicians.

Nevertheless, some caution is needed, as the nature of the data in this study is cross-sectional, it is difficult to make causal inferences about the relationships between the predictor variables and career success. For some predictor variables, such as the background variables, it is plausible that these were indeed the cause of career success rather than the other way around. On the other hand, for other predictor variables, such as the professional context variables, the causal direction of the associations we found is less straightforward. For instance, are musicians more successful because they are represented by a manager? Or did these musicians already have higher levels of success, making them more interesting for managers to offer their services to these musicians? We would argue that both notions hold some truth as managers can be important catalysts for musician's career success but, at the same time, managers would not invest their time and money in certain musicians if they were not confident enough about earning back their investments.

Of course, this also has implications for the interpretation of the associations of predictor variables that disappear in the final step of the regression analysis. We want to note that all of the associations in the first two steps of the regression analysis are still important, but because the professional network has such an important impact on career success, these associations are no longer found when controlling for professional network. In other words: though other characteristics and skills are relevant, having a professional network is the best single predictor of success.

Another limitation of our study is that the level of career success was based on self-report. Although we expect that our respondents have provided us with realistic and honest estimations of the amount of sold CDs, airplay, and performance frequency, it would be worthwhile to add data from other resources such as radio station playlists, official sales figures or income tax figures. A similar point can be made in regards to the respondents' perception of their musical talent. In our study, we measured talent using self-report questions, a more objective measure of musical talent, such as an extensive musical aptitude test, may show different outcomes for the relation between musical talent and career success.

What the results in this study do not clearly show is how the individual musician's career is shaped. Yet, from the survey data we do know that musicians often have to have more than one act, and in addition they have to rely on other jobs, either music related work such as teaching or working short contracts as studio-musicians, or non-music related work. This is also an indication that becoming or being a professional musician is an ambition that is characterized by high levels of insecurity and financial as well as emotional hardships. Furthermore, though this study solely focuses on objective career success, it is likely that many musicians consider the realisation of their artistic aspirations, that is, the quality of their artistic output, as an equally valid indicator of their success. This subjective notion of artistic career success and the way it is related to musician's objective career success should also be taken into account in future research.

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Our research findings offer a number of important insights into the career development of musicians. However, this is only a first step and additional research is needed to study the relationships in more detail as well as to explore the importance of predictors of career success that were overlooked in this study. Moreover, we call for longitudinal studies, in which musician's careers are followed over a number of years, that take into account the different predictors of career success presented in this study. This kind of research will shed more light on the career development of musicians and the secret of their success.

APPENDIX A. CHARACTERISTICS OF MUSICIANS IN SAMPLE

Table A1. *Number of acts per respondent*

Number of acts	Frequency	Percentage
1	146	42,9
2	99	29,1
3	58	17,1
4	18	5,3
5 or more	19	5,6

Table A2. *Distribution of vocals and musical instruments among respondents*

	Frequency	Percentage
Vocals	248	72,9
Guitar	181	53,2
Piano / Keyboard	121	35,6
Bass	87	25,6
Drums / Percussion	62	18,2
DJ / Producer	29	8,5
Other	56	16,5

Note: percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could have multiple answers.

Table A3. *Distribution of musical genres among respondents*

Genre	Frequency	Percentage
Pop	218	64,1
Rock	188	55,3
Singer/ Songwriter	141	41,5
Hip Hop	74	21,8
Jazz	64	18,8
R&B	60	17,6
Dance	59	17,4
Funk	55	16,2
Metal	52	15,3
Blues	45	13,2
Punk	37	10,9
Reggae	21	6,2
Other	61	17,9

Note: percentages add up to more than 100 because respondents could have multiple answers.

APPENDIX B. SCALE ITEMS DEVELOPED BY AUTHORS

All answer options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) except for social support 1 (*no support*) to 5 (*a lot of support*)

Social support

With regard to your musical career, how much support do you receive from:

- your friends?
- your mother?
- your father?
- other family members?

Perseverance

- If I had to choose between a partner and music, I would choose music
- I would give ten years of my life to be successful
- For music I will put everything else aside, even friendships
- I live only for music

Professionalism

- I see myself as a professional musician
- I am very different from musicians who only make music for fun
- I take my career as a musician very seriously

Networking

- I am engaged in networking activities to help my musical career progress
- I have access to a network of people who can help me in my career as a musician
- Because I know the right people, I can get things done easier

Authenticity

- The music that I make cannot be made by any other musician
- My music is very different from music made by other musicians
- When people hear my music, they immediately know that it was made by me

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CHAPTER 4

CAREER TRAJECTORIES OF DUTCH POP MUSICIANS A LONGITUDINAL STUDY*

* This chapter is based on: Zwaan, K., ter Bogt T.F.M., Raaijmakers, Q.A.W. (Under review) Career trajectories of Dutch pop musicians: A longitudinal study.

ABSTRACT

Systematic studies of artistic careers are scarce and this is the first large-scale study on the career development of musicians. Using a prospective longitudinal approach we followed a sample of aspiring musicians in the Netherlands ($N = 369$) over a three-year period. First we identified four groups of musicians with different career patterns, that is, upward careers, downward careers, stable successful careers and stable unsuccessful careers. By means of a multigroup growth mixture model we examined how career success was influenced by social support, professional attitude and professional network. Results showed that successful musicians experience more social support, have a stronger professional attitude and a more extensive professional network. Moreover, our study shows that these findings were consistent both between and within the different career pattern groups.

INTRODUCTION

The economic impact of creative workers is becoming increasingly important in most Western societies. This occupational category consists of people whose economic function is to create new ideas, new technology, and creative content and includes people from such diverse fields as science and engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment. Richard Florida uses the term 'creative class' to identify this group, as opposed to the 'working class' of the industrial society, and the 'service-class' of the post-industrial society. Throughout his work, he emphasizes the influential and crucial role of this creative class for the economic growth of cities, regions, and countries (Florida, 2004, 2006).

Although his theory is not undisputed, empirical research in several countries has shown that the creative sector is indeed becoming increasingly important. For example, in the United Kingdom the creative industries are growing at more than twice the rate of other economic sectors (Missingham, 2006). Similarly in the Netherlands, the number of jobs in the creative sector has increased 34% between 1996 and 2004 (Raes & Hofstede, 2005, p.10). It is therefore surprising to note how little empirical attention has been given to the career development and career success of creative professions.

The growing importance of the creative workforce also leads to changes in the meaning and structure of work, leisure, and everyday life (Florida, 2004, 2006). Some of these changes, such as the employment context and the restructuring of organizations, have been discussed and theorized about within the field of career studies. It has been theorized that as a result of these societal changes, there has been a shift from traditional career models that conceptualise careers as linear trajectories within a single organization, to a new career model, that is, the 'boundaryless career' (Arthur, Khapova, & Wilderom, 2005; Cheramie, Sturman, & Walsh, 2007; Eby, Butts, & Lockwood, 2003; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). This theoretical concept, first introduced by Arthur and Rousseau (1996), refers to the notion that many professionals are no longer tied to one organization throughout their careers, but rather seek to manage their own career paths. Furthermore, boundaryless career theory emphasizes increased physical and psychological mobility, unpredictability of careers, and the psychological importance of success (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Cheramie et al., 2007; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006).

Both creative class theory and boundaryless career theory give cause for the empirical study of the careers of artists, an important and central group within the creative workforce. First, regarding creative class theory, Florida (2005) mentions that cities, or regions, can gain economic advantages by attracting and nourishing creative talent. In order to better understand what infrastructure and conditions are necessary to achieve such an economic advantage calls for a systematic study of artistic careers. Second, relating to boundaryless career theory, we argue that artists in general have always experienced high levels of physical and psychological mobility as they are usually not bound to a single organization but often hired on a project basis, leading to high levels of career uncertainty and the necessity of multiple-job holding (Gabrielsson, 2003; Janssen, 2001; Kemp, 1996; Menger, 1999). In addition, Menger (2001) points out that the arts can be seen as forerunners in the trend towards increasingly flexible labour markets. A similar point was made both by Bielby and Bielby (1999) in their study of careers of Hollywood screenwriters and the impact of brokerage organizations

in a contingent labour market as well as by Jones (1996) in her study of project networks within the film industry. Consequently, empirical studies on artistic careers could hold important implications for other types of careers that are 'becoming' boundaryless. Also, Sullivan (1999) calls for career scholars to consider other research fields that may provide important insights for investigating boundaryless career patterns.

Although much has been written on the boundaryless career, there is still insufficient empirical research on the factors that are important for career success within the boundaryless career (Cheramie et al., 2007; Eby et al., 2003). Furthermore, as most studies are still cross-sectional, there is a need for longitudinal research on career trajectories (Arthur et al., 2005; Sullivan, 1999). In the present study we use a prospective longitudinal approach to examine the career development of a group of aspiring musicians in the Netherlands. Furthermore, we will analyse how their career patterns are influenced by three predictor variables, i.e., *Social Support*, *Professional Attitude*, and *Professional Network*.

Measuring musicians' career success

It has been noted that success is an evaluative concept and that judgements about success always depend on the perspective of the person who judges (Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995). Furthermore, career success is a multi-dimensional concept, meaning that it encompasses several dimensions which influence the evaluation as to whether someone is successful or not. In the career studies literature, career success is often defined in two ways. A distinction is made between subjective career success relating to subjective feelings of success and career satisfaction, and objective career success relating to objectively observable career accomplishments (Judge et al., 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005).

Scholars within the field of empirical research on artistic careers have focused on aesthetic success, an additional conceptualisation of career success, and applied criteria indicating the artistic impact of the artist's work. These factors include the amount of attention that artists receive from art critics, their inclusion in reference works, or ratings on aesthetic significance by experts or critics (e.g., Giuffre, 1999; Kozbelt, 2005; Simonton, 1986; van Rees & Vermunt, 1996). This conceptualization of success in artistic professions is usually referred to as *reputation*. An artist's reputational value can be translated into financial value, and reputation then becomes the foundation of economic success (Becker, 1982; Beckert & Rössel, 2004; Bourdieu, 1996).

In this study our aim is to compare the individual careers of different types of aspiring musicians over time. As both subjective success and aesthetic success are based on subjective perceptions of artistic achievements, we argue that these conceptualisations of success are not appropriate to make comparisons between individual careers of musicians. We therefore limit our scope to indicators of objective career success. For pop musicians there are three related areas in which the career accomplishments can be objectively observed: media exposure, sales of recordings and live performance (Frith, 1988; Longhurst, 2007; Shuker, 2001; Toynbee, 2000). These three areas also represent the most important sources of income for musicians and thus form the basis of their economic success.

Career Trajectories of Dutch Pop Musicians

Social Support, Professional Attitude, Professional Network

A cross-sectional study among pop musicians has shown that among a set of 21 different correlates of career success, *Social Support*, *Professional Attitude*, and *Professional Network* were the strongest predictors of career success (Zwaan, ter Bogt, & Raaijmakers, 2009). We will first elaborate on how these variables are theoretically related to career success.

For this study we defined social support as the amount of emotional support that musicians received from family, friends and peers in their musical activities. Social support was positively related to career outcomes in several studies (e.g., Feldman & Ng, 2007; Harris, Moritzen, Robitschek, Imhoff, & Lynch, 2001; Ng et al., 2005; Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996). Several aspects and different mechanisms in the relationship between social support and career success have been studied. For example, social support was found to have a positive overall impact on career optimism, which in turn can be linked to career outcomes (Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998). It was also found that social support plays an important antecedent role in the reduction of work-family conflict (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Michel, Mitchelson, Pichler, & Cullen, 2009). Other studies found that social support reduced absenteeism, depression and anxiety, and that it led to an increased resistance to burnout (El-Bassel, Guterman, Bargal, & Su, 1998; Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998; Olson & Schultz, 1994; Winstead, Derlega, Montgomery, & Pilkington, 1995). As artistic careers in general are characterized by high levels of job and career uncertainty (Gabrielsson, 2003; Janssen, 2001; Kemp, 1996; Menger, 1999) and performance anxiety is a common trait among different kinds of musicians (Hamann, 1985; Hamann & Sobaje, 1983; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Lehrer, 1987) we argue that it is reasonable to assume that social support plays an important role in the career development of musicians.

Professional attitude was defined as gauging to what extent the respondents saw themselves as professional musicians, or in other words, how much their music making activities was perceived as the central activity in their professional careers. As such, professional attitude is related to concepts such as Work Centrality or Job Involvement, defined as the degree of importance that working has to the identity of an individual (England & Whitely, 1990) and the psychological importance of work in the person's life (Parasuraman et al., 1996). In earlier studies, Work Centrality and Job Involvement were found to be positively related to career success (e.g., Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005; e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1996).

In several studies the amount of network relationships, or social capital, has been positively related to career success (e.g., Bozionelos, 2008; Ng et al., 2005; Tharenou, 1997). Often social capital is operationalized as informal networks within or outside the organization. However, for musicians their network takes a different shape, as this occupational group is largely dependent on several intermediary agents for the realization of their career accomplishments. These intermediaries include: persons working at record companies, radio stations and other media personnel, music publishers, booking agents, artist managers, and music journalists. As such, the professional networks of musicians show strong resemblance to the project networks in the film industry as described by Jones (1996). For these kinds of occupational groups social networks are important as knowing 'the right people' might lead to career opportunities and career advancement. A study among Artist and Repertoire

(A&R) managers working in the music industry showed that investing in a professional network is indeed an important requirement for musicians to become successful (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). Menger also emphasizes the need for artists in general to invest in networking activities (Menger, 2001). Finally, the importance of network relationships, or in other words having an extensive professional network, is emphasized in studies on the boundaryless career. Here it is argued that in the era of the boundaryless career, individuals frequently make career moves and maintaining a good network is seen as crucial to career success (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Sullivan, 1999).

Additionally, within boundaryless career theory three categories of career competencies are distinguished. These are: 1) 'Knowing *why*' competencies that relate to the individual's career motivation, personal meaning of work and career identification, 2) 'Knowing *how*' competencies including career-relevant skills and job-related knowledge, and 3) 'Knowing *whom*' competencies that refer to career-related networks and contacts. It is hypothesized that all three categories of competencies are positively related to career outcomes (DeFillipi & Arthur, 1996; Eby et al., 2003; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). Professional attitude can be grouped in the 'knowing *why*' category whereas professional network can be grouped in the 'knowing *whom*' category.

Studying career success with a longitudinal model

A career, and as a result career success, by definition develops over time (Arthur, Hall, & Lawrence, 1989). The most obvious method for social scientists to study development over time is to carry out a longitudinal analysis. Previous research on either career success or artistic career development can be placed in one of the following two types of longitudinal studies.

In career studies, several personal characteristics have been related to career outcomes in later stages of the respondent's professional life. Examples include studies on the influence of proactive personality on career success over a two year period (Seibert, Kraimer, & Crant, 2001); motivation and general cognitive ability on career success three to four years later (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1994); level of self-esteem during university years on career success ten years after graduation (Salmela-Aro & Nurmi, 2007); and the Big Five personality dimensions on career success in later stages of adulthood (Soldz & Vaillant, 1999) (Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999).

In all of these studies the predictor variables were measured at the first measurement (Time 1) and were related to the dependent variable, career success, measured at a later point in time (Time 2), ranging from one year to sixty years later. As such, these studies are not truly longitudinal studies, at least not in the sense that they longitudinally track the development of career success by measuring career success at several moments in time. Moreover, all of these studies focus on career development within organisations that can be typified by relatively strong institutionalised hierarchies; these are all characteristics of the 'traditional career'.

Longitudinal studies that focus on artistic careers generally use a different longitudinal approach as these are often based on retrospective data. Examples include Coulangeon, Ravet & Roharik (2005) who studied the gender differences in professional trajectories of

French performing musicians, actors and dancers; Ekelund & Börjesson (2002) who studied the publishing careers of US literary writers; Bielby & Bielby (1999) who studied the employment and earning trajectories of US film and television writers; Giuffre (1999) who studied the development of the reputation of American fine art photographers; or Van Rees & Vermunt (1996) who studied the development of the reputation of Dutch literary authors.

These studies on artistic careers do use longitudinal data, but they are all retrospective in nature. As a result, these studies only include relatively successful artists, that is, those who were in fact able to establish a professional career. As Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi (1976, p.161) note: "it is impossible to compare retrospectively those who achieve success with those who do not." Their study (Getzels & Csikszentmihalyi, 1976) and a study by Stohs (1991) using their dataset, are the only two examples of longitudinal studies to our knowledge that prospectively follow the careers of a small sample of aspiring artists. As Menger observes: "Ideally, one should follow true cohorts of artists through longitudinal surveys to get reliable and valuable information" (Menger, 2001, 245).

The present study is the first to our knowledge that takes on such an approach to systematically study the careers of a specific group of artists, that is, musicians, a group typically characterized by having boundaryless careers. We have followed a sample of musicians during three years, making this study truly longitudinal in nature, in order to find out how social support, professional attitude and professional network is related to the development of career success measured at three subsequent year intervals.

METHOD

Participants and procedure

Respondents were initially approached in collaboration with a number of organizations in the Dutch pop music field that either provided us with names and addresses or sent out a call through their mailing list or website. These included three national organizations: the pop musician's labour union *FNV-KIEM BV Pop*; the *Dutch Pop and Rock Institute (Nationaal Pop Instituut)*¹⁴; and the *Grand Prize of the Netherlands (Grote Prijs van Nederland)*¹⁵. In addition, four regional pop organizations (*GRAP*, Amsterdam; *PopUnie*, Zuid-Holland; *BRAM/BrabantPop*, Noord-Brabant; and *Grooverpop*, Groningen) assisted in the approach to respondents. These organisations represent two areas within the Randstad, the urbanized centre of the Netherlands, which includes the cities of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, and two areas outside of the Randstad (the provinces of Groningen and Noord-Brabant). Lastly, we approached students from the *Rock Academy* in Tilburg, which is the first professional education institute for pop musicians in the Netherlands.

The primary objective was to include individual musicians who could be described as individuals with an aspiration to become professional musicians. The sample covers musi-

¹⁴ The *Dutch Pop and Rock Institute (Nationaal Pop Instituut)* is now part of the Music Centre the Netherlands. This organization promotes Dutch music in the Netherlands and abroad and is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Culture. One of their activities is publishing the monthly magazine FRET which features reviews of demos from unsigned bands.

¹⁵ The *Grand Prize of the Netherlands (Grote Prijs van Nederland)* is the biggest national popular music talent competition and consists of four genre divisions, Pop/Rock, Singer/Songwriter, Dance and Hip Hop/R&B.

cians from a broad range of backgrounds, genres, and regions. Age limits were set at 16 and 35 years. The minimum age in the Netherlands to earn money from public performances on a regular basis is 16 years. The upper age limit was set at 35 years since after this age, career mobility for artistic careers rapidly decreases (Menger, 1999). This resulted in a sample of 369 musicians, representing a broad range of backgrounds, genres, and regions. For the first measurement the age mean (M) for the sample was 25.1 years ($SD = 4.7$). These participants were approached at three annual time-points, in 2005 (T1), 2006 (T2) and 2007 (T3), during the months September and October coinciding with the annual beginning of the 'cultural season' in the Netherlands. To increase our response rate, we used suggestions described by Dillman, such as pre-notification letters and follow-up messages, which are part of the tailored design method (Dillman, 2000).

Measures

Career Success. The dependent variable in this study, *Objective career success*, was measured using seven items regarding objectively observable career accomplishments over the past 12 months representing the three dimensions (live performance, media coverage, and sales of recordings) central to career success in pop music. *Performance frequency* measured the average amount of performances within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = *once per year* to 8 = *more than once per week*. *Performance frequency on regional/ national music festivals* measured the average amount of performances on respectively regional and national music festivals within the past 12 months. *Regional/ national radio airplay* measured the average amount of plays of the respondent's music on respectively regional and national radio stations within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = *0 plays* to 10 = *more than 50 plays*. *Regional/ national television airplay* measured the average amount of plays of the respondent's music on respectively regional and national TV stations within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = *0 plays* to 10 = *more than 50 plays*. *CD sales* measured the number of CDs sold within the past 12 months ranging from 1 = *0 CDs sold* to 6 = *more than 1000 CDs sold*.

Factor analysis (PCA) of the standardized item scores resulted in one latent construct containing the items *performance frequency*, *performance frequency regional festivals*, *performance frequency national festivals*, *regional radio airplay*, *national radio airplay*, and *regional television airplay*. Two items, *national television airplay* and *CD sales* did not load on this construct and were left out of the analysis. On national television channels in general little attention is given to starting musicians. Only a few musicians within our sample did receive some coverage, but the vast majority of respondents answered they received no airplay at all on national television. With regard to CD-sales we argue there are two further reasons why this item is left out of further analysis. First, for this group of musicians selling CDs is not the most important criterion for success. In most cases performing, radio airplay and journalistic attention eventually leads to an increased importance of CD sales; however, most musicians within our sample had not (yet) reached this point in their careers. Second, within the record industry in general, CD sales have dropped dramatically over the past five to ten years, making it an unstable indicator of success for any longitudinal study.

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The factor analysis resulted in one composite scale score which was computed as the mean value of the six separate scale item values. This score was sufficiently reliable across the three measurements (Cronbach's α : .80 for T1, .83 for T2 and .80 for T3). Missing values for the career success variable were replaced by the mean of ten, multiple imputed values. Multiple Imputation (Little & Rubin, 2002) is a model-based approach of the treatment of missing values, which outperforms the traditional treatment of missing values such as deletion or mean replacement procedures (e.g., Acock, 2005). Based on the linear growth model depicted in Figure 1, we selected in AMOS the built-in Bayesian stochastic regression imputation approach. This resulted in 10 complete data files, with missing values replaced by model imputed values. In subsequent analyses, missing values were replaced by the means of these 10 imputed values.

Predictor variables. The model in this study is based on three predictor variables that were measured at T1: *Social Support*, *Professional Attitude* and *Professional Network*. These scales were developed by the authors and the scale items for Social Support and Professional Attitude can be found in appendix A. *Social support* measures the amount of support from family and friends experienced by the respondents as indicated by four items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .82$). *Professional Attitude* measures whether subjects perceived themselves as professional musicians, this scale consists of three items (Cronbach's $\alpha = .69$). *Professional Network* was measured using four dichotomous items: whether subjects were represented by a *manager*, a *booking agency*, a *record company*, and/or a *music publisher* (response categories: 0 = *no* and 1 = *yes*). Factor analysis showed these four items were indicative of the same latent construct. Therefore, the response values of these items were summed to obtain a 5 point scale score, measuring the width of their *Professional Network*, with scores ranging from 0 (*no professional network*) to 4 (*complete professional network*). Reliability of this scale is .57, as indicated by the Kuder–Richardson Formula 20 (KR–20, the measure of internal consistency reliability for dichotomous measures).

Preliminary analysis

In order to see how the predictor variables were related to the development of career success within our sample, we grouped respondents based on their career patterns. These career patterns were identified using a variable that was computed by subtracting each respondent's score on career success at T1 from their score on career success at T3. A positive score on the resulting variable indicated that the respondent's career success had increased over time, whereas a negative score was an indication of a decrease in career success over time. Based on this score, four different groups were identified. A first group consisting of musicians who had a difference score higher than the mean difference ($M = -.07$) plus one standard deviation ($SD = .57$). This group included respondents that had experienced a rise in their career success, therefore, the career pattern of this group was labeled as 'upward careers' ($n = 41$). The second group included musicians with a difference score below the mean difference minus one standard deviation. Because the respondents in this group experienced a decline of their career success over time, we labeled the career pattern of this group the 'downward careers' ($n = 52$). The remaining respondents had a difference score between the mean difference minus one standard deviation and the mean difference plus

one standard deviation. For these musicians their level of career success remained relatively stable over time. Within this group we further distinguished between two groups: 1) respondents who were relatively successful ($n = 69$), representing the top 25 percentile scores on career success within the stable group. This group's career pattern was labeled as 'stable successful careers'. And 2) respondents who were relatively unsuccessful representing the remaining 75 percent of the stable group ($n = 207$) their career pattern was labeled as 'stable unsuccessful careers'.

Strategy of analysis

The influence of the predictor variables, *Social support*, *Professional Attitude*, and *Professional Network* on the development of career success for these four groups were examined by means of a multigroup growth mixture model using the AMOS 16.0 software package (Arbuckle, 2007). Figure 1 shows a graphic representation of this growth model. The top part of Figure 1 represents the three subsequent measurements of career success indicated with T1, T2, and T3. The development over time is depicted in the middle part of the model,

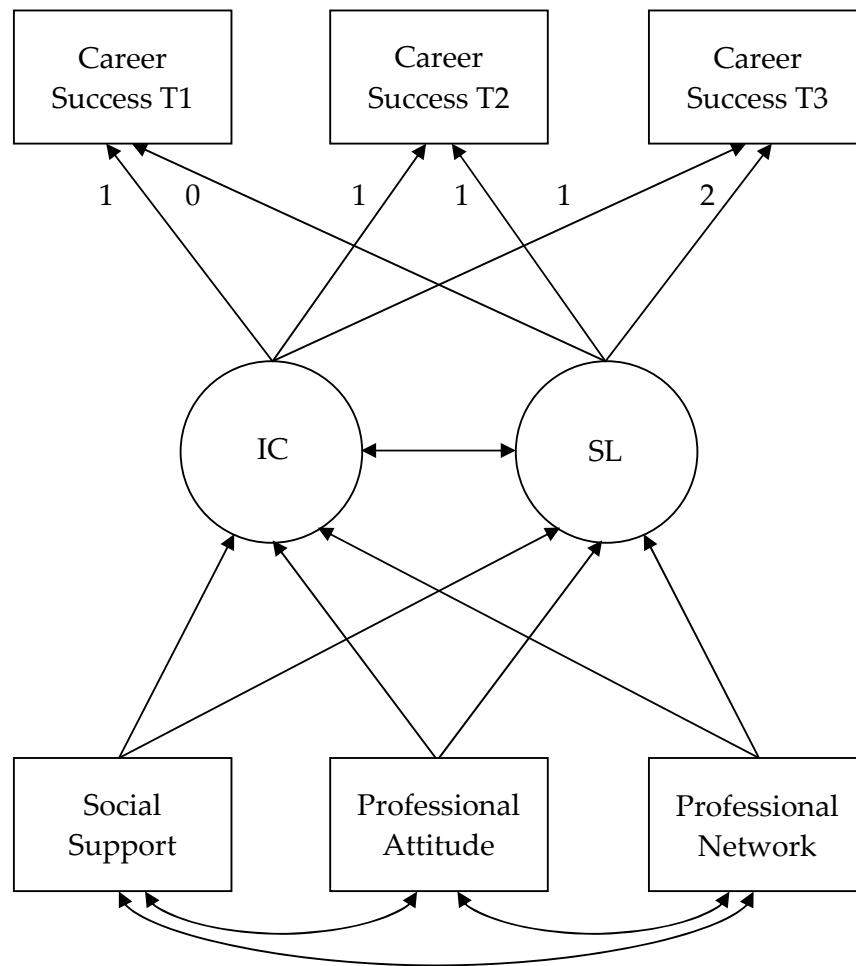


Fig. 1.

Growth

Career Trajectories of Dutch Pop Musicians

Model

indicated by the intercept and slope (IC and SI in Figure 1). This model tests a linear trend in the development of success. Therefore, the loadings of the observed success variable at T1, T2 and T3 were fixed at 1 (intercept factor). The loadings for the slope were linearly fixed at 0, 1, and 2 for T1, T2 and T3 respectively. The residual variances of the observed variables were allowed to be freely estimated. The values for the intercept and slope were predicted by individual variation on the three independent variables, *Social Support*, *Professional Attitude* and *Professional Network*, shown in the bottom part of Figure 1. Finally, the correlations between the three predictor variables and the correlation between the residuals of intercept and slope were included in the model and were construed to be equal across groups.

The fit of the estimated growth model was assessed with the chi-square (χ^2) statistic and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA). In addition, we used a fit index that is less sensitive to sample size: the Comparative Fit Index (CFI). For the CFI statistic, values of .90 are acceptable and of .95 or higher are indicative of good fit (Byrne, 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999). For the RMSEA, values of up to .08 are acceptable and values of .05 indicate good fit (Browne & Cudeck, 1993; Byrne, 2001).

RESULTS

Descriptives

For all of the variables in this study, the means, standard deviations and correlations are displayed in table 1. As can be seen from this table all of the variables are significantly correlated to all other variables. Most noticeably, the three measurements of objective success are highly and significantly correlated. Additionally, the predictor variables are all significantly and relatively strongly correlated to the three measurements of success. These high intercorrelations justify further analysis of these variables in a longitudinal model.

Table 1. Means, standard deviations and correlations of study variables (N = 369).

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Objective Success T1	.01	.73	–					
2. Objective Success T2	-.03	.68	.79**	–				
3. Objective Success T3	-.06	.63	.65**	.84**	–			
4. Social Support	3.53	.90	.28**	.28**	.30**	–		
5. Professional Attitude	3.54	.78	.34**	.35**	.34**	.21**	–	
6. Professional Network	.82	1.06	.54**	.47**	.42**	.24**	.30**	–

Note. ** $p < .01$.

Development of Growth Model

In order to keep the complexity of our estimated model as small as possible without losing information, we first tested a series of nested growth models with varying number of freely estimated parameters. We started with a model in which all parameters were fixed (Model 1) and throughout Models 2 to 4 we increased the number of freely estimated parameters based on theoretical expectations. Because we expected to find differences in development, we first

allowed both intercept and slope means to be freely estimated in Model 2. Second, since we expected to find different means for the predictor variables for the different groups in our model, these means were allowed to be freely estimated in Model 3. Third, as predictor variables were measured at T1, we expected to find differences in the regression weights from the predictor variables to the intercept. Therefore, these regression paths were allowed to be freely estimated in model 4. Finally, we compared the model fit to a model in which all parameters were freely estimated (Model 5). Table 2 shows the fit indices for these five models, as well as the model comparisons.

Table 2. *Model Fit Indices and Model Comparison Statistics, N = 369*

Model	χ^2	df	χ^2/df	CFI	RMSEA	$\Delta\chi^2 (\Delta df)$	ΔCFI	$\Delta RMSEA$
1	564.77	67	8.43***	.439	.143	-	-	-
2	163.64	61	2.68**	.884	.068	401.13 (6)***	.445	.075
3	72.92	52	1.40*	.976	.033	90.73 (9)***	.092	.035
4	51.78	43	1.20	.990	.024	21.14 (9)*	.014	.009
5	39.98	34	1.18	.993	.022	11.80 (9)	-.003	.002

Note. Model 1: all parameters fixed;

Model 2: means intercept and slope freely estimated;

Model 3: Means intercept, slope, Social Support, Professional Attitude and Professional Network freely estimated;

Model 4: Means intercept, slope, Social Support, Professional Attitude, Professional Network, and all three regression paths from the predictor variables to the intercept freely estimated;

Model 5: all parameters freely estimated.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Model 1 shows a bad fit to the data, and although including the intercept and slope mean parameters in Model 2 shows a significant increase in fit, this model shows only a marginally acceptable fit. Including the predictor mean parameters in Model 3 also shows a significant increase in fit and leads to a satisfactory model fit. Our final model, Model 4, in which we included the regression paths from the predictor variables to the intercept, shows a significant increase in fit. This final model shows a good fit to the data. Table 2 also shows that Model 4 fits significantly better than Models 1, 2, and 3. Moreover, freeing up any more parameters (Model 5) does not lead to a significant increase in model fit.

Social Support, Professional Attitude and Professional Network and the Development of Career Success in Different Career Groups

Table 3 displays the estimated model parameters for the four groups in our final model. With respect to the growth parameters (intercept and slope) the analyses shows no unexpected results. The groups with upward careers and stable unsuccessful careers both have a relatively low score on career success at T1 whereas the groups with stable successful and downward careers have a high score on career success at T1. With regard to the intercept mean, the group stable successful differs significantly from the group stable unsuccessful. No other significant differences in intercept mean were found between the groups. These

Table 3. Model estimates

	Upward (<i>n</i> = 41)			Downward (<i>n</i> = 52)			Stable Unsuccessful (<i>n</i> = 207)			Stable Successful (<i>n</i> = 69)		
	<i>M</i>	SE <i>M</i>	β	<i>M</i>	SE <i>M</i>	β	<i>M</i>	SE <i>M</i>	β	<i>M</i>	SE <i>M</i>	β
IC	-1.04 _{a,b}	.57	-	-.56 _{a,b}	.49	-	-.95 ^{***} _b	.13	-	-.09 _a	.30	-
SL	.48 ^{***} _d	.05	-	-.47 ^{***} _c	.05	-	.02 _a	.04	-	-.11 [*] _b	.05	-
SS	3.75 ^{***} _b	.13	-	3.65 ^{***} _b	.09	-	3.34 ^{***} _a	.07	-	3.86 ^{***} _b	.10	-
PA	3.60 ^{***} _{a,b}	.11	-	3.63 ^{***} _b	.09	-	3.38 ^{***} _a	.06	-	3.95 ^{***} _c	.07	-
PN	.66 ^{***} _a	.15	-	1.42 ^{***} _b	.16	-	.47 ^{***} _a	.05	-	1.49 ^{***} _b	.15	-
	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	β
SS→IC	-.10 _a	.10	-.15	.21 [*] _b	.11	.23	.10 ^{***} _{a,b}	.03	.25	.01 _{a,b}	.05	.02
PA→IC	.26 [*] _a	.13	.31	.04 _a	.11	.04	.06 [*] _a	.03	.15	.17 [*] _a	.07	.25
PN→IC	.11 _{a,b}	.09	.19	.29 ^{***} _b	.06	.53	.07 [*] _a	.03	.15	.15 ^{***} _a	.03	.47

Note. IC = Intercept; SL=Slope; SS = Social Support; PA = Professional Attitude; PN = Professional Network

Within rows, means (*Ms*) or regression weights (*Bs*) with different subscripts differ significantly at $p < .05$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

findings indicate that at our first time of measurement we can only distinguish between two groups, i.e., those who are relatively successful and those who are relatively unsuccessful. Both groups appear to be heterogeneous as the successful group contains individuals who are temporarily successful and their success decreases over time, in other words, the musicians with downward careers. Likewise, there are individual musicians within the unsuccessful group whose success increases over time, that is, the musicians with upward careers.

This difference can also be noted when looking at the slope mean values (see Table 3). The four groups all differ significantly on the slope mean value, indicating that their career development is indeed significantly different. Moreover, the slope mean values are in line with the expected career patterns. The group upward careers have a positive slope value and the group downward careers have a negative slope value. The group stable unsuccessful have a slope value that is close to zero, and finally, the group stable successful have a slope value that is also relatively close to zero. However, for this last group, the slope value is slightly negative indicating that remaining successful for three years is rather difficult for this group of musicians.

With regard to the means of the predictor variables social support, professional attitude and professional network, we find several significant differences between the groups (see Table 3). For social support we find that only the group with stable unsuccessful careers differs significantly from the other three groups. Apparently, social support is essential to either be successful or to become successful, as is the case for the other three groups. Furthermore, the group with stable successful careers shows the highest score on social support, which is a further indication for the importance of social support for career success.

Professional attitude shows similar results. The group with stable successful careers has the highest mean on this variable and also differs significantly from all other groups. This indicates that the truly successful musicians within our sample have a significantly higher professional attitude. In addition, the group with stable unsuccessful careers has the lowest mean on professional attitude and differs significantly from the group with downward careers. The group with downward careers, who do experience success at T1, does not differ significantly from the group with upward careers. These are further indications that having a professional attitude is connected to being, or becoming, successful.

For professional network we find that the two groups that are relatively successful at T1, the groups with downward careers and with stable successful careers do not differ significantly from each other. Both groups have a significantly higher score on professional network when compared to the other two groups, who are relatively unsuccessful at T1. The group with stable unsuccessful careers and the group with upward careers do not differ significantly from each other. These results show that professional network is related to being successful at T1.

If we look at the estimated regression weights from the predictor variables on the intercept, we find that for the group with upward careers, the only significant regression path is for professional attitude. This indicates that within this group with upward careers, those who have a higher score on professional attitude are more successful at T1, and this effect is relatively strong ($B = .26$, $\beta = .31$).

For the group with downward careers the results show that the regression weights for social support and professional network are positively and significantly related to the inter-

cept. This suggests that, within this group, musicians who experience more social support and who have a broader professional network have a higher score on career success at T1. These effects are relatively strong ($B = .21$, $\beta = .23$ for social support; and $B = .29$, $\beta = .53$ for professional network).

Within the group of musicians with stable unsuccessful careers we find that all three predictor variables are positively and significantly related to the intercept. This shows that within this group the more successful musicians experience more social support, have a more professional attitude and have a broader professional network. However, the effect sizes are relatively small ($B = .10$, $\beta = .25$ for social support; $B = .06$, $\beta = .15$ for professional attitude; and $B = .07$, $\beta = .15$ for professional network).

Finally, for the group of musicians with stable successful careers, we find that professional attitude and professional network are positively and significantly related to the intercept, but social support is not. These effects are moderate ($B = .17$, $\beta = .25$ for professional attitude; and $B = .15$, $\beta = .47$ for professional network). This indicates that even within this group of successful musicians, the musicians who have a more professional attitude and who have a broader professional network are even more successful.

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to see how social support, professional attitude and professional network were related to the development of career success for groups of musicians with different career patterns. For this purpose we distinguished four groups of musicians. One group of musicians who were relatively successful at T1, but who experienced downward careers. A second group of musicians who were relatively unsuccessful at T1 and who experienced upward careers. A third group of musicians who were relatively unsuccessful at T1 and who remained unsuccessful over time. And finally, a group of truly successful musicians, that is, musicians who were relatively successful at T1 and who were able to sustain their rate of success over time. Since all four groups differed significantly on their values for the slope mean, the found career patterns were indeed significantly different.

The results of the growth model further showed that the groups differed significantly on all three predictor variables. Overall, musicians with stable successful careers experienced the most social support, had the strongest professional attitude and the best professional network. The musicians with stable unsuccessful careers experienced the smallest amount of social support, had the weakest professional attitude, and the smallest professional network. This indicates that social support, professional attitude as well as professional network are all significantly related to the level of career success. We find further support for these relationships when looking at the differences within the four groups. Most strikingly, we found that within the group of musicians with upward careers, those with a stronger professional attitude were more successful. Furthermore, within the group of musicians with downward careers we found that those with a better professional network were more successful, at least at T1. This indicates that for these musicians professional network is linked to initial higher level of success, but having a professional network does not automatically result in success at a later stage in their career. Finally, we found that within the group of musicians who were able to remain relatively successful throughout our period of measure-

ment, the more successful musicians were characterized by a stronger professional attitude and a better professional network.

With regard to social support, we found that the group with stable successful careers experienced the most social support. When compared to the other three groups, only the group of relatively unsuccessful musicians experienced significantly lower levels of social support. Nevertheless, even within this unsuccessful group, we found that those musicians who experienced relatively more social support were more successful. Based on this consistent pattern of findings we argue that social support is essential for the career success of musicians. In earlier research it has been suggested that this relationship can be explained through the positive effect of social support on career optimism which in turn leads to better career outcomes (Friedman et al., 1998). Other studies have found that social support leads to an increased resistance to burnout (El-Bassel et al., 1998; Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998). This seems particularly relevant since many scholars have noted that artists in general often experience high levels of job and career uncertainty (Gabrielsson, 2003; Janssen, 2001; Kemp, 1996; Menger, 1999). Additionally, for many musicians performance anxiety can be a serious occupational problem leading to job-related stress (Hamann, 1985; Hamann & Sobaje, 1983; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Lehrer, 1987). Therefore, it seems plausible that the relationship between social support and career success within this study indicates that social support is important for musicians for coping with job-related stress.

Regarding professional attitude we found that the group of musicians with stable unsuccessful careers had the weakest professional attitude when compared to the other three groups. Furthermore, within the group of musicians with upward careers, those with a stronger professional attitude were even more successful. Finally, for musicians with stable successful careers, a stronger professional attitude was also positively and significantly related to career success. These results imply that having a professional attitude is crucial for the career success of musicians. This finding is consistent with earlier studies in which conceptually related attitudes such as Work Centrality or Job Involvement were found to be positively related to career success (e.g., Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005; e.g., Parasuraman et al., 1996).

We argue that the relationship between professional attitude and career success can be best explained through the importance of professional attitude for the development of a professional network. In an earlier study it was found that important intermediaries in the record industry indicate that musicians should be aware of how the music business works. Musicians who lack some basic knowledge of the music industry are less likely to be selected by record companies or other important intermediary agents (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009). This suggests that for musicians in order to be successful it is necessary to have a professional attitude as well as know the right people to help further their career. Our results indeed show that professional attitude and professional network were significantly correlated. We suggest that in future research the relationship between professional attitude and the development of professional network should be studied in more detail.

Finally, our results concerning professional network showed that, similar to the findings for the other predictor variables, the most successful musicians had the best professional network, whereas the group of relatively unsuccessful musicians had the smallest professional network. Within the group of musicians with stable successful careers, those

with a better professional network were more successful. Furthermore, when compared to social support and professional attitude, we find that professional network was most strongly correlated to career success. Based on these findings we argue that the musician's professional network is most central to their career success. For musicians, being represented by a manager, booking agency, music publisher or record company directly leads to measurable career improvement. It is through their professional contacts that musicians are able to translate their reputational value into financial value (Becker, 1982; Beckert & Rössel, 2004; Bourdieu, 1996). Additionally, their professional network enables musicians to get in touch with the right people who can help to increase their career success (Zwaan & ter Bogt, 2009).

The findings in this study are relevant in the light of boundaryless career theory. Several authors have noted that individuals more frequently make career moves and that the increased physical and psychological mobility of individual careers leads to career unpredictability and career uncertainty (Arthur et al., 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Cheramie et al., 2007; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). This study shows that the more successful individuals experience higher levels of social support. This indicates that for boundaryless careers, as is the case for pop musicians, experiencing social support is an important prerequisite for both psychological well-being as well as economic success. Moreover, having a professional attitude may be necessary to maintain a good network. This professional network is crucial to career success because the musicians in this study receive most of their job opportunities through their network. Similar conclusions have been drawn for other types of boundaryless careers in which individuals increasingly have to rely on both their professional network as well as informal social networks (de Janasz & Forret, 2008; Sullivan, 1999).

An important limitation of our study holds that our sample only includes Dutch musicians who are mainly focused on the Dutch market and this could have implications for the generalizability of our findings. However, the Dutch market for pre-recorded music is a mature market and is even the 10th largest market in the world regarding sales (IFPI, 2008). Similar to many other local music markets there is a strong focus on Anglophone repertoire from the US and UK and the market is dominated by four multinational major record companies whose combined market share is around 70% (NVPI, 2007, 2008). This hints at the possibility that the situation for Dutch musicians is comparable to other countries and that our findings are indeed applicable to generalization. Yet, the Netherlands is a relatively small country and most Dutch musicians do not become successful in other countries, which turns the Dutch market into a sort of natural 'career ceiling'. This clearly has implications for the career perspective of Dutch musicians, especially when compared to musicians from the UK or the US.

In summary, our study shows that for musicians to be successful it is important to be supported by family and friends. It is even more important, if not crucial, for musicians to have a professional attitude towards their musical activities. Finally, the musician's professional network is most central to their career success. For musicians to become successful and to retain a high level of success throughout their career, intermediaries such as managers, booking agents and record companies are indispensable. This shows how important it is for individual musicians to find reliable and trustworthy intermediaries.

APPENDIX A. SCALE ITEMS DEVELOPED BY AUTHORS

Social support

Answer options ranged from 1 (*no support*) to 5 (*a lot of support*)

With regard to your musical career, how much support do you receive from:

- your friends?
- your mother?
- your father?
- other family members?

Professional attitude

Answer options ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*)

- I see myself as a professional musician
- I am very different from musicians who only make music for fun
- I take my career as a musician very seriously

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"My formula for success is rise early, work late and strike oil."

–Jean Paul Getty

(American industrialist, 1892–1976)

"Genius is 1 per cent inspiration and 99 per cent perspiration"

–Thomas Alva Edison

(American inventor & businessman, 1847–1931)

*"Of course there is no formula for success except perhaps
an unconditional acceptance of life and what it brings."*

–Arthur Rubinstein

(Polish-American pianist, 1887–1982)

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The aim of this study was to explore the determinants of career success of Dutch pop musicians and to find out what background, personality and contextual factors influence the career development of musicians. To avoid any misunderstanding, I want to stress that I did not set out to find any definitive formula for success. The three quotes at the beginning of this chapter illustrate this point and I want to shortly elaborate on this before discussing the main findings of the studies presented in this dissertation.

The quotes have in common that they include some reference to important requisites to become successful. They are also similar in the sense that they all assume to some extent the active involvement of the person aspiring to become successful. Both Edison and Getty do this by stating the need to work hard in order to achieve success, clearly demonstrating a protestant work ethic (For an elaborate discussion on protestant work ethic see: Furnham, 1990; Mudrack, 1997). Also, by referring to being lucky enough to drill in the right spot and strike oil, Getty points towards external causes of success, such as in this case the notion of coincidence or luck.

By contrast Rubinstein, being a pianist and in that regard more comparable to the musicians in this study, takes on a somewhat different approach to success and is both more romantic as well as more realistic. More romantic in the sense that he does not equal success with hard work, but with the idea that it is necessary to be influenced by all things life has to offer, both good and bad, to become a successful musician. At the same time, Rubinstein is more realistic in the sense that he argues that there is no such thing as a formula for success, implying that each individual's success is based on different causes, choices and coincidences. In other words: why someone becomes successful cannot be explained by any general rules.

Although I fully and wholeheartedly agree with the idea that there is no definite or absolute formula for success, I do believe that it is possible to examine whether successful musicians have specific characteristics in common, and consequently, whether unsuccessful musicians lack these characteristics. In the studies presented in this dissertation we have

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examined what these characteristics are and whether they have some predictive power to, at least partially, explain why some pop musicians are successful and others are not.

In the introductory chapter of this dissertation I described three research traditions that served as the theoretical foundation of my own research. These were cultural sociology, ethnographic studies on music making and career psychology. In general, the main focus of studies on popular music within cultural sociology are the process of cultural production and how issues of power play a role in this process (e.g., Hesmondhalgh, 2000; Negus, 1999, 2002; Peterson & Anand, 2004), but these studies usually do not give attention to individual career development. Similarly, ethnographic studies on music making do examine the individual practices of musicians but do not search for explanations why musicians become successful (e.g., Cohen, 1991; Finnegan, 1989; Jones, 1998). Finally, career psychologists do pose the question why individuals experience career success and what individual characteristics are related to career development (e.g., Arthur, Hall & Lawrence, 1989; Holland, 1985, 1996; Judge, Cable, Boudreau, & Bretz, 1995; Ng, Eby, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2005). However, within this field researchers generally overlook career development within artistic professions, including musicians. Referring to studies on artistic careers in general, Susanne Janssen (2001) calls for a comprehensive research strategy that takes into account both background or personality traits as well as the influence of social and institutional contexts that affect artists' career development. The aim of the studies in this dissertation was to find out what these background, personality traits and contextual influences were with regard to the pop musician's career. Below I will discuss the main findings of these studies

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

The first study's (Chapter 1) primary aim was to examine what background, personality, and contextual characteristics were thought to be related to success by key intermediaries in the music industry. For this purpose a selection of influential Artist and Repertoire managers (A&R) with considerable experience in the Dutch music industry were interviewed. In addition, we addressed the questions of how do the A&R managers go about when they search for new artists and what selection criteria do they take into account.

With regard to the musician's background we found that both family background and musical socialisation was said to play an important role in the musician's development. However, there was no agreement among the respondents about the ideal family background or type of musical socialisation. In addition, likability, self-criticism and motivation were referred to as important personality traits for musician to become successful whereas insecurity and perfectionism were mentioned as personality traits that are very common amongst successful musicians. Regarding the musician's social environment, it was found that friends and family should be supportive but at the same time they should remain critical.

Our results regarding the selection process itself showed that the A&R manager's professional network is the most important source for the selection of new artists. This can be explained because the A&R manager legitimizes the quality of both the new artist and his or her music through the opinion of other music industry professionals. This finding indicates the importance for musicians to have a broad professional network and is in line with earlier

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research findings on artistic careers (Giuffre, 1999; Jones, 1998; Peterson and Ryan, 1983). This led us to conclude that musicians with the right connections have a better chance of becoming successful professionals.

Furthermore, we found that although our respondents identified a number of background, personality and contextual factors that they thought were related to the career success of musicians, most of these characteristics were not mentioned as important criteria for the selection of new artists. The respondents indicated that the quality of the music and the quality of the live performance serve as the two most important selection criteria. Central to these selection criteria are the musician's composing, instrument, and performance skills reflecting his or her musical talent. Other important criteria are possible audience and media appeal as well as the musician's looks, charisma, and motivation.

These findings served as an important starting point for the questionnaire we developed and used in the other studies. Furthermore, our findings regarding the A&R manager's selection process are largely consistent with earlier findings on A&R practices in the US and the UK (Frith, 1996; Negus, 1992, 1999, Stratton, 1981, 1983) indicating that these selection processes are not only relatively persistent over time, but they are also applicable to other, smaller European music markets.

Some of the A&R managers in the first study also mentioned talent competition shows as a resource in the search for new artists. Public talent competitions did already exist in the 17th century, and probably earlier, but it was through the emergence of broadcasting media including radio, television and the Internet that these competitions became national media events (For an elaborate discussion of the history of talent competitions see: Reijnders, 2006). For a number of famous artists their participation in a talent competition has indeed been the starting point of their careers as professional musicians.

Our second study (Chapter 2) focuses on one of the most successful television shows of the last decade, *Idols*, which is set up around a talent competition in which a large number of contestants compete to become the nation's next *Pop Idol*. During the third series of the show in the Netherlands we conducted a survey among contestants of the audition round ($n = 369$) and the contestants who entered the final rounds of the show ($n = 27$). In this study success was operationalized as passing through the first two rounds of the talent competition and belonging to the select group of contestants who were individually portrayed in the show. As a result, to the large television audience these contestants were the most visible participants and this is an important career accomplishment.

In order to find out how these two groups differed we compared them on several personal characteristics that were found to influence career outcomes in other settings. These were divided in six categories including musical socialisation (Davidson, Howe, & Sloboda, 1997), social support (Davidson et al.; 1997, Kemp, 1996, 1997; Kogan, 2002), personality (Judge et al., 1995; Judge, Higgins, Thoresen, & Barrick, 1999; Kemp, 1996, 1997; Ng et al., 2005), motivation and work ethic (Kogan, 2002; Stremikis, 2002), professional context and musical activities (Davidson et al., 1997; Top, 1993), and Self-Evaluation (Stahl, 2004).

The results of this study indicated that the successful contestants more often grew up in a musical family, had more often followed music lessons, were more insecure, had a low intrinsic but high extrinsic motivation, had more experience in performing, and had a higher self-evaluation of their physical appearance. We argued that the concept of 'preparedness',

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that is, taking training and self-evaluation seriously, explains the majority of our findings. We concluded that the most successful contestants are not the ones that start from zero.

In our third study (Chapter 3), we investigated the influence of background, personality traits and context on the career success of a diverse group of aspiring young musicians. These musicians were approached with the help of a number of organizations in the Dutch pop music field. The aim of this study was to explore the associations of the background characteristics, personal attributes and the professional context of a group of musicians with their career success. In this study career success was measured using a set of objectively observable career accomplishments. Relating to the practices of being a musician, these career accomplishments include media exposure, sales of recordings and live performance (e.g., Frith, 1988; Longhurst, 2007; Shuker, 2001; Toyne, 2000).

In this study we found that the more successful musicians were male, had higher educational levels, more often had a partner, experienced higher levels of social support, and had more experience with performing. As to personality we found that the Big Five characteristic of conscientiousness was negatively related to career success whereas professionalism and networking were positively related to career success. These findings indicate that the more successful musicians can be characterized as sloppy (or in positive terms, flexible and spontaneous), that they have a stronger professional attitude and that they are more actively engaged in networking activities. Finally, with regard to their professional context we found that the more successful musicians were those who had invested in a website to support their musical activities as well as those who had an extensive professional network.

From our analysis, conscientiousness, professionalism as well as professional context emerged as the most important correlates of career success. We concluded that these were the strongest predictors of career success. Also, based on our findings, we argued that any study of the career success of musicians, and possibly of other types of artistic professions, should take into account their background, personality as well as their professional context because all three of these categories were significantly related to career success. Furthermore, based on the relative influence of each category, we found that the professional context is the most important category. We argued that the musician's professional network is an approximation of the musician's reputation, because this reputation is largely determined by the reputation of the professionals that represent him or her.

This study provides further support for the idea that for musicians it is important to know the right people to help them advance in their career. The findings in this study support the majority of findings from study one and replicate the findings on performance experience from study two. Furthermore, when we compare the findings of study two and three we find that although the measurement of success differs, the same pattern of findings emerged with regard to social support, educational level, conscientiousness, professionalism, and networking. That is, more successful musicians experienced more social support, have a higher educational level, are more flexible and spontaneous, have a stronger professional attitude, and are more involved in networking.

To provide a better insight into the development of the careers of musicians over time, for our fourth study (chapter 4) we have followed the same sample of musicians during three years in their career. For this longitudinal study we focused on three of the most important characteristics, social support, professional attitude and professional network,

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with the aim to see how these were related to the development of career success of four groups of musicians with different career patterns. The first group of musicians was relatively successful at the first time of measurement (T1) but during the three year period they experienced a downward trend in their level of career success. The second group was relatively unsuccessful at T1 but experienced an upward career. Groups three and four both experienced relatively stable careers, but group three was relatively unsuccessful at T1 and remained relatively unsuccessful whereas group four was relatively successful at T1 and this group was able to sustain their relatively high rate of success over time.

The development of career success and the influence of social support, professional attitude and professional network on career success for these four groups were studied using a multigroup growth mixture model. We found that these four groups differed significantly in terms of their career development. When comparing these four groups, the musicians with stable successful careers experienced the most social support, had the strongest professional attitude and the best professional network whereas the musicians with stable unsuccessful careers experienced the smallest amount of social support, had the weakest professional attitude and the smallest professional network. This indicates that social support, professional attitude as well as professional network are all significantly related to career success over time. When looking at the differences in career success within each group, we found further support for these relationships. Within the group with upward careers, those with a stronger professional attitude were more successful. In the group with downward careers, musicians with a better professional network were more successful. Within the group who experienced stable successful careers, the more successful musicians were characterized by a stronger professional attitude and a better professional network. Finally, even within the group with stable unsuccessful careers, we found that those musicians who experience more social support, who have a strong professional attitude and who have a better professional network were relatively more successful.

Based on the consistent pattern of findings we concluded that social support, professional attitude and professional network are essential for the career success of musicians. Following earlier research findings on social support (El-Bassel, Guterman, Bargal, & Su, 1998; Friedman, Kane, & Cornfield, 1998; Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998), we argued that the positive effect of social support on career success can be explained through the importance of social support for coping with job-related stress and career uncertainty that is common in artistic professions (Hamann, 1985; Gabrielsson, 2003; Janssen, 2001; Kemp, 1996; Lehrer, 1987; Menger, 1999). Regarding professional attitude we argue that the positive relationship with career success can be explained through the importance of professional attitude for the development of a professional network. In study one we found that characteristics such likeability, knowledge of the music business and marketing skills were mentioned as factors important for the progress of a musician's career. Taken together these characteristics are descriptive of having a professional attitude. Furthermore, additional analysis showed that professional attitude and professional network were highly and significantly correlated. With regard to professional network, we explain our findings because musicians receive most of their job opportunities through their network. For musicians, being represented by a manager, booking agency, music publisher or record company directly leads to measurable career improvement.

SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

The studies presented in this dissertation are the first to systematically study the career development of pop musicians. It is also one of the first to take up an approach in which the influence of both background and personality as well as the professional context of pop musicians are related to their level of career success. Given the exploratory nature of the different studies, not all possible research fields or possible correlates of career success could be covered in such a way that is satisfactory to everyone. The empirical research presented in this dissertation attempted to establish a connection between the research traditions of cultural sociology and career psychology. I will shortly discuss how our findings relate to these fields.

First, an important finding relating to the field of cultural sociology, is that we found that the professional context is the most influential for the career development of musicians. This can be interpreted as a justification of the focus of cultural sociologist on the specific processes of cultural production. However, we did also find that background and personality traits are related to career success. Including background and personal characteristics into research designs could hold important advancements in the study of cultural production. With regard to family background and musical socialisation, there is a need of empirical research following the notion of the reproduction of social inequality (Bourdieu, 1984) in order to find out whether social class distinctions have any implications for the career development of musicians.

Second, empirical studies in the field of career psychology usually look at institutionalized careers. The empirical studies in this dissertation have taken up a similar research strategy by looking at what characteristics are related to career success, but focused on the careers of musicians, an different type of occupational group. We found interesting differences with regard to personality, for example our findings regarding the Big Five personality traits differed considerably from previous research findings (Judge et al., 1995; Ng et al., 2005). We found no significant associations for extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, or neuroticism with career success. And, contrary to earlier research, we found a significant negative association of conscientiousness with career success. Apparently being a musician calls for other personality than, for example, being a corporate executive. Other findings, such as the positive influence social support, are in line with previous research suggesting that social support is essential in different kinds of professions (El-Bassel et al., 1998; Friedman et al., 1998; Myung-Yong & Harrison, 1998). In addition, because it was found that the professional context of musicians is the most important, I would argue that studies that try to explain career success solely by looking at personality traits overlooks a whole set of alternative explanations.

Recent developments in the way that organizations, and as a result individual careers, are structured have led to theoretical developments in career psychology. A new central concept is the so-called boundaryless career, implying that individuals more frequently make career moves and that the increased physical and psychological mobility of individual careers leads to career unpredictability and career uncertainty (Arthur, Inkson, & Pringle, 1999; Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; Sullivan & Arthur, 2006). It has been noted that within boundaryless careers individuals increasingly have to rely on both their professional net-

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work as well as informal social networks (De Janasz & Forret, 2008; Sullivan, 1999). Our findings with regard to the importance of professional network for the careers of musicians are in line with and give further support to boundaryless career theory.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The exploratory nature of the research presented in this dissertation lead to a number of limitations. The first relates to the geographic boundaries of the studies, and as a result to the generalizability of our findings. However, we also noted that the Dutch market for prerecorded music is a mature market and the 10th largest market in the world (IFPI, 2009). Similar to many other local music markets there is a strong focus on anglophone repertoire from the US and UK and the market is dominated by four multinational major record companies whose combined market share is around 70% (NVPI, 2009). This hints at the possibility that situation for Dutch musicians is comparable to other countries and that our findings are indeed generalizable. Yet, for most Dutch musicians the Dutch market is a sort of natural 'career ceiling' in terms of career perspective, especially when compared to musicians from the UK or the US.

Second, musicians in general form a rather heterogenous research population. Although I have attempted to cover the diversity present in this population by looking at musicians covering broad range of musical genres, including areas both within the urban centre as well as more peripheral areas, and making use of the help of different organizations in the Dutch pop music field, there are no official figures on the number and characteristics of pop musicians in the Netherlands, making it almost impossible to make any statements about the representativity of our sample. However, on a number of characteristics, such as gender distribution, our study sample does correspond to two recent studies on popular musicians in the Netherlands (Van Bork, 2008; IJdens et al., 2009) giving us some indication that our sample is representative of the population of pop musicians in the Netherlands.

Thirdly, within the studies we did not measure the musical ability, the musical skills or the musical talent of the musicians. It may seem obvious that musical talent has an influence on the career development of musicians. However, we did not find any valid and easy to use objective measure for musical talent. As an approximation of musical talent we used a self-report measurement of talent based on a comparative subscale of self-perceived talent developed by Watt (2004). However, we found that this self-report measure of talent was not related to career success.

In addition to this self-reported measure only one other measurement of musical talent was found in the literature. This is actually a series of tests developed during the first part of 20th century by Carl Emil Seashore and involved the measurement five kinds of musical skills: discrimination of pitches, dissonance, rhythmical figures, intensity and the ability to remember melodies (Seashore, 1919; Stanton & Seashore, 1935). Because of practical and financial limitations it was beyond the scope of this dissertation to use this test of musical abilities and measure the musical talent of our respondents in a more objective method. However, in future research it would be interesting to see whether this test is applicable to

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contemporary popular music and whether or not differences in musical ability affect the career outcomes of pop musicians.

Finally, with regard to future research on career development in general and the career development in artistic professions in specific, I want to suggest that new studies should take into account background, personality as well as their professional context because the empirical research in this dissertation suggests that all three categories are significantly related to career success.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS OF STUDY FINDINGS

This dissertation was written mainly for an academic audience, but in some of the studies I hinted towards the practical implications for musicians. To finish I want to point at three such practical implications regarding the everyday reality of aspiring pop musicians in the Netherlands. It is noted throughout this dissertation that to become a musician is an uncertain endeavor and those musicians who dare to 'go for it' and try to become professional musicians stand a good chance of *not* becoming successful. However, this does not mean that a society should not invest on the necessary infrastructure to maintain a high level of musicianship and to increase the possibilities for many aspiring musicians to at least let them do something they are passionate about.

The first point I want to make is that the existing infrastructure of rehearsal spaces, live venues and music festival are pivotal for the professional context of starting musicians. Most musicians take their first steps into a professional career by developing their musical skills and showing these while performing in front of an audience. Beginning musicians should be given the opportunity to do this, not only because performance was found to be the main source of income among the musicians studied, but also because rehearsal spaces, live venues and festivals serve as an important meeting place. It is here that musicians can start developing their professional network, which was found to be so important for career success. As such venues and festivals have a responsibility in taking up starting musicians as part of their programme. Also, local, regional and national governments have a responsibility in providing some of the necessary facilities and possibilities to accommodate venues and festivals.

Second, in the first study it was found that A&R managers are more willing to work with musicians who have a basic understanding of how the music industry works, who have some basic marketing knowledge and who are familiar within the wider professional context of the music industry. Therefore, an important way to support the careers of beginning musicians is to offer reliable and accessible information on the professional context and its threats and opportunities. Musicians should know how to get in touch with venues, the media, record companies and other relevant parties. Besides practical information musicians should also be able to easily get financial and legal advice. A number of organizations in the Dutch popular music field are involved in providing this kind of information, and over the last decade a number of educational institutions starting providing professional training for pop musicians. These developments have the potential to lead to a flourishing and healthy popular music culture.

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Finally, although this dissertation did not specifically focus on music education, some attention was given to musical socialization. In the first study it was found that A&R managers believe musical education can be important for the early musical development of musicians. Also, in the second study we found that the group of successful Idols candidates more often had followed music lessons. Finally, in the sample of pop musicians used in the other studies, the majority of musicians had followed music lessons. Obviously musical education plays an important role in the career development of musicians in general. Musical education at all different levels should therefore be fundamentally supported to warrant a high quality level of musical education. To those who are not yet convinced that music is an important part of life and that all members of society should have equal opportunities to learn and appreciate music, I want to finish with a quote from ancient times which is still just as valid today as it ever was:

Music gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness, gaiety and life to everything. It is the essence of order, and leads to all that is god, just, and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but never less, dazzling, passionate, and eternal form.

–Plato¹⁶

¹⁶ Quoted in: Watson, D. (1991) *Wordsworth Dictionary of Musical Quotations*. Ware, UK: Wordsworth Reference.

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SAMENVATTING



SUMMARY IN DUTCH

Samenvatting

Van alle periodes in de geschiedenis van de mensheid bestaan er bewijzen dat de mens muziek heeft gemaakt en alle ons bekende culturen kennen een vorm van muziek. Het maken van muziek is dus een universele eigenschap van de mensheid. Alhoewel er nog veel onduidelijkheid bestaat over hoe muziek is ontstaan, hoe onze hersenen nu precies muziek verwerken en wat de redenen zijn waarom mensen eigenlijk van muziek genieten, het staat vast *dat* wij allemaal in staat zijn om muziek te begrijpen en er van te genieten. Het is echter niet zo dat iedereen ook daadwerkelijk actief muziek maakt, en van de mensen die dat wel doen zou lang niet iedereen zich muzikant noemen. Toch oefent het beroep van muzikant grote aantrekkingskracht uit, zoals wel mag blijken uit de duizenden mensen die zich inschrijven voor de audities van televisieshows zoals *Idols* of *X-factor*. Maar ook buiten dit soort grootschalige shows om zijn dagelijks er duizenden mensen actief op zolderkamers, oefenruimtes, garages en studio's met het maken van muziek, iets dat zij met veel passie doen. Van al deze muzikanten is er maar een kleine minderheid die omschreven kan worden als succesvol en die met het maken van muziek in staat is om de kost te verdienen. Binnen dit proefschrift is geprobeerd om antwoord te geven op de vraag welke persoonsgebonden eigenschappen nu van invloed zijn op het carrièresucces van popmuzikanten in Nederland. Hierbij is carrièresucces gedefinieerd als objectief waarneembare carrièreprestaties, voor popmuzikanten betekent dit concreet: aandacht in de media, verkoop van geluidsdragers en optreden.

Het is voor het eerst dat er systematisch en op grote schaal onderzoek is gedaan naar de carrières van muzikanten. Binnen verschillende onderzoekstradities is wel aandacht voor de beroepspraktijk van muzikanten, zoals bijvoorbeeld de cultuursociologie, maar hier wordt meestal vooral gekeken naar de context waarbinnen de muzikant opereert, namelijk de muziekindustrie. Hierbij staan vragen centraal als welke machtsverhoudingen spelen een rol in de muziekindustrie en op wat voor manier zijn deze van invloed op de beroepspraktijk van de muzikant. Er is weinig tot geen aandacht voor de individuele carrièreontwikkeling van muzikanten en welke persoonsgebonden factoren daarbij nou eigenlijk een rol spelen. Binnen een ander onderzoeksveld, namelijk de arbeids- en organisatiepsychologie, staat deze vraag wel centraal. Onderzoekers binnen dit veld proberen erachter te komen welke individuele factoren van invloed zijn op het al of niet hebben van carrièresucces. Doorgaans wordt dit onderzocht binnen de context van grote organisaties en bedrijven waarbij de carrières van individuen in sterke mate zijn geïnstitutionaliseerd. De meer artistieke beroepen, waarbij dit niet het geval is, worden vaak buiten beschouwing gelaten. Binnen dit proefschrift is getracht deze twee onderzoeksvelden met elkaar te verbinden. Hieronder zal ik een overzicht geven van de belangrijkste bevindingen uit de vier studies binnen dit proefschrift.

Studie 1: Een kwalitatieve studie naar de selectieprocessen en selectiecriteria van A&R managers werkzaam in de Nederlandse platenindustrie

De eerste studie richt zich op de vraag welke factoren van belang zijn voor het succes van muzikanten volgens een groep belangrijke tussenpersonen in de muziekindustrie. Voor dit doel zijn diepte-interviews uitgevoerd met invloedrijke Artist & Repertoire (A&R) managers met aanzienlijke ervaring in de Nederlands muziekindustrie. Een tweede vraag die centraal

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stond betref de vraag hoe A&R managers op zoek gaan naar nieuw talent en welke selectiecriteria zij daarbij hanteren.

Met betrekking tot de achtergrond bleek dat zowel familie-achtergrond en muzikale socialisatie werden genoemd als belangrijke factoren in de ontwikkeling van muzikanten. Er was echter geen overeenstemming tussen de respondenten wat nu precies de meest ideale familie-achtergrond of type muzikale socialisatie is. Tevens werden aardig zijn, zelfkritiek en motivatie genoemd als belangrijke karaktereigenschappen die helpen om succesvol te worden. Onzekerheid en perfectionisme werden genoemd als persoonlijkheidskenmerken die veel voorkomen onder succesvolle muzikanten. Met betrekking tot sociale omgeving werd gemeld dat vrienden en familie zowel ondersteunend als kritisch moeten zijn.

Onze resultaten betreffende het selectieproces zelf laten zien dat de A&R manager vooral gebruik maakt van zijn professionele netwerk als bron bij het zoeken naar nieuw talent. Dit kan verklaard worden vanuit het feit dat de A&R manager de kwaliteit van zowel de nieuwe artiest als zijn of haar muziek gelegitimeerd ziet door de meningen van andere muziekindustrie-professionals in zijn netwerk. Voor muzikanten blijkt het dus van belang te zijn om een breed professioneel netwerk te hebben. Deze bevinding komt overeen met bevindingen uit eerder onderzoek. Hieruit concluderen wij dat muzikanten die betere connecties hebben een grotere kans hebben om succesvol te worden.

Hoewel onze respondenten een groot aantal achtergrond-, persoonlijkheid- en contextfactoren in verband brengen met het carrièresucces van muzikanten, blijkt dat zij de meeste van deze factoren niet beschouwen als selectiecriteria bij de selectie van nieuwe artiesten. De A&R managers gaven aan dat de kwaliteit van de muziek en de kwaliteit van het live-optreden de twee meest belangrijke selectiecriteria zijn. Andere belangrijke selectiecriteria zijn het mogelijke bereik onder het publiek en in de media maar ook het uiterlijk, charisma en motivatie van de muzikant zelf.

De bevindingen van deze eerste studie vormden een belangrijk uitgangspunt voor de vragenlijst die wij hebben ontwikkeld en die gebruikt is bij de dataverzameling van de andere studies. Bovendien kwam het merendeel van onze bevindingen met betrekking tot het selectieproces van de A&R manager overeen met eerdere studies hiernaar in de Verenigde Staten en het Verenigd Koninkrijk in de jaren '80 en '90. Dit is een aanwijzing om aan te nemen dat conventies en handelwijzen binnen de muziekindustrie zowel historisch als geografisch sterke overeenkomsten vertonen.

Studie 2: Succes binnen de Idols televisietalentenjacht

Een aantal A&R managers in de eerste studie noemden talentenjachten als een van de bronnen om nieuw talent te ontdekken. Deze talentenjachten kennen een lange traditie en er zijn voorbeelden te noemen van bekende, succesvolle artiesten die op deze manier hun carrière als professional zijn begonnen. De tweede studie richt zich daarom op de televisietalentenjacht *Idols*, een van de meest succesvolle televisieshows van het afgelopen decennium. Binnen deze show gaat een grote groep zangers en zangeressen de strijd aan om het nieuwe popidool van Nederland te worden.

Tijdens de derde serie van de show in Nederland zijn twee groepen deelnemers benaderd voor dit onderzoek en ondervraagd. De eerste groep bestond uit deelnemers aan de

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eerste auditieronde die tijdens deze ronde afvielen ($n = 369$). De tweede groep bestond uit deelnemers die de eerste twee auditieronden wel doorkwamen en mee zouden gaan doen aan de workshop- en liveshow-ronde ($n = 27$). Binnen deze studie werd succes geoperationaliseerd als het doorkomen van de eerste twee auditieronden en behoren tot de selecte groep deelnemers die op individueel niveau werden geportretteerd in de show. Hierdoor waren deze deelnemers voor het grote televisiepubliek de meest zichtbare deelnemers van de show en dit vormt op zichzelf al een belangrijke prestatie binnen de muzikale carrière van deze deelnemers.

Om erachter te komen welke factoren gerelateerd zijn aan het succesvol zijn binnen de *Idols*-competitie hebben wij de twee groepen deelnemers met elkaar vergeleken. Hierbij hebben wij gekeken hoe deze twee groepen van elkaar verschillen met betrekking tot eigenschappen waarvan in eerder onderzoek was vastgesteld dat deze gerelateerd zijn aan succes. Deze factoren zijn onverdeeld in zes categorieën, te weten muzikale socialisatie, sociale ondersteuning, persoonlijkheidseigenschappen, motivatie en werkethiek, professionele context en muzikale activiteiten en tenslotte zelfreflectie.

Uit de resultaten van deze studie kunnen wij opmaken dat de succesvolle deelnemers vaker zijn opgegroeid in een muzikale familie; vaker muzikles hebben gevolgd; zich meer onzeker voelen; een lage intrinsieke motivatie hebben (gemotiveerd zijn door interne beloningen zoals voldoening), maar juist een hoge extrinsieke motivatie hebben (gemotiveerd zijn door externe beloningen zoals roem of geld); meer ervaring hebben met optreden; en een positiever zelfbeeld hebben ten opzichte van uiterlijk. Als verklaring voor deze verschillen betogen wij dat de groep succesvolle deelnemers omschreven kan worden als een groep die beter voorbereid is. Dit betekent dat deze groep zaken als training en zelfreflectie serieus nemen en dat zij vooraf beter weet waar zij aan beginnen en ook waarom zij meedoen aan de show. Onze conclusie luidt dus ook dat de succesvolle kandidaten niet vanaf nul beginnen.

Studie 3: Determinanten van carrièresucces van popmuzikanten

In de derde studie hebben wij de invloed van achtergrond, persoonlijkheid en context op het carrièresucces van een diverse groep beginnende muzikanten onderzocht. Deze muzikanten zijn benaderd met behulp van een aantal organisaties in het Nederlandse popmuziekveld, te weten de muzikantenvakbond FNV-KIEM BV Pop, het Nationaal Pop Instituut (NPI), een aantal regionale popkoepels (GRAP, Amsterdam; Popunie, Zuid-Holland; BRAM/ Brabantpop, Noord-Brabant; Groverpop, Groningen), de Grote Prijs van Nederland en de Rockacademie in Tilburg. Dit leverde een steekproef van 340 muzikanten in de leeftijdsgroep 26 tot en met 35 jaar ($M = 25.1$ jaar, $SD = 4.7$ jaar) die te omschrijven zijn als relatief onbekende muzikanten die een professionele carrière nastreven.

Het doel van deze studie was om te onderzoeken welke achtergrondkenmerken, persoonlijkheidseigenschappen en professionele contextfactoren gerelateerd zijn aan het carrièresucces van de groep ondervraagde popmuzikanten. Binnen deze studie werd carrièresucces gemeten door te kijken naar objectief waarneembare prestaties op het gebied van media-aandacht, verkoop van geluidsdragers en optreden. De resultaten van deze studie laten zien dat de relatief succesvolle muzikanten vaker man zijn, een hoger opleidingsniveau hebben, vaker een partner hebben, meer sociale ondersteuning ervaren en meer ervaring hebben met

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optreden. Met betrekking tot persoonlijkheid bleek dat nauwgezetheid, een van de Big Five persoonlijkheidskenmerken negatief gerelateerd was aan carrièresucces, met andere woorden de succesvolle muzikanten zijn vaker slordig, spontaan en minder planmatig. Daarnaast bleek een professionele houding positief gerelateerd aan carrièresucces. Tenslotte, met betrekking tot de professionele context bleek dat de succesvolle muzikanten vaker een uitgebreid professioneel netwerk hadden en ook vaker hadden geïnvesteerd in een website waarbij hun muzikale werkzaamheden centraal stonden.

Op basis van de verdere analyse concluderen wij dat nauwgezetheid, professionele houding en het professionele netwerk de meest belangrijke voorspellers van succes zijn. Daarnaast concluderen wij dat als er gekeken wordt naar het carrièresucces van muzikanten, of artistieke beroepen in het algemeen, er rekening moet worden gehouden met zowel achtergrond, persoonlijkheid als professionele context omdat alle drie categorieën van invloed zijn op het carrièresucces. Van deze drie categorieën blijkt verder dat de professionele context relatief gezien het sterkst gerelateerd is met carrièresucces. Binnen de professionele context is vooral het professionele netwerk van belang omdat de reputatie van individuele muzikanten is grotendeels afhankelijk van de reputatie van de tussenpersonen die hem of haar vertegenwoordigen.

De conclusies van deze derde studie geven verdere aanwijzingen voor het belang van muzikanten om de juiste personen te kennen die hen verder op weg kunnen helpen in hun carrière. De resultaten van deze studie bevestigen het merendeel van de bevindingen van studie 1 en repliceren de bevinding van studie 2 met betrekking tot ervaring met optreden. Bovendien zien we een vergelijkbaar patroon met betrekking tot sociale ondersteuning, opleidingsniveau, nauwgezetheid, professionele houding en netwerken als we de bevindingen van studie 2 en 3 met elkaar vergelijken. Alhoewel de manier waarop succes is gemeten verschillend is voor deze twee studies blijkt bij beide studies dat de succesvolle muzikanten meer sociale ondersteuning ervaren, een hoger opleidingsniveau hebben, meer flexibel en spontaan zijn, een meer professionele houding hebben en actief bezig zijn met netwerken.

Studie 4: Een longitudinale studie naar de carrièreontwikkeling van popmuzikanten

Om een beter inzicht te krijgen in de carrièreontwikkeling van muzikanten over tijd hebben we dezelfde groep popmuzikanten ($N = 369$) gedurende drie jaar gevolgd. Hiervoor is dezelfde steekproef gebruikt als in studie 3 aangevuld met een extra groep studenten van de rockacademie, deze groep is gedurende de onderzoeksperiode drie keer benaderd met een interval van een jaar. Voor deze longitudinale studie hebben wij ons gericht op de invloed van de drie meest belangrijke voorspellers van carrièresucces, te weten sociale ondersteuning, professionele houding en professioneel netwerk. Het doel van deze studie was om te onderzoeken hoe deze drie eigenschappen van invloed zijn op de carrière-ontwikkeling van popmuzikanten. Hiervoor hebben wij een onderscheid gemaakt tussen vier groepen muzikanten met een verschillend patroon in carrièreverloop. De eerste groep muzikanten was relatief succesvol ten tijde van het eerste meetmoment (T1), maar gedurende de drie jaar dat zij gevolgd zijn hebben hun carrières zich negatief ontwikkeld, dat wil zeggen, zij zijn minder succesvol geworden. De tweede groep was relatief onsuccesvol, maar zij zagen het

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niveau van succes juist stijgen, oftewel een opwaartse carrière. Groepen drie en vier hadden relatief stabiele carrières waarbij groep drie relatief onsuccesvol was op T1 en dit ook bleef. Groep vier was relatief succesvol op T1 en deze groep was ook in staat om dit relatief hoge niveau van carrièresucces te behouden gedurende de onderzoeks-periode van drie jaar.

Voor deze vier groepen is gekeken naar de ontwikkeling over tijd van carrièresucces en de invloed van sociale ondersteuning, professionele houding en professioneel netwerk op carrièresucces. Hierbij is gebruik gemaakt van een multigroep Growth Mixture Model. Uit de resultaten kwam naar voren dat de vier groepen significant verschillend waren met betrekking tot hun carrièreontwikkeling. Uit een onderlinge vergelijking van de vier groepen onderling kwam naar voren dat de muzikanten met stabiel succesvolle carrière het meeste sociale ondersteuning ervoeren, de sterkste professionele houding hadden en het beste professionele netwerk hadden terwijl de stabiel onsuccesvolle muzikanten het minst sociale ondersteuning ervoeren, de zwakste professionele houding hadden en het minst goede professionele netwerk hadden. Deze resultaten wijzen erop dat zowel sociale ondersteuning, professionele houding alsook professioneel netwerk significant gerelateerd zijn aan de ontwikkeling over tijd van carrièresucces.

Als er gekeken wordt naar de verschillen in carrièresucces binnen elke groep, dan vinden we verdere aanwijzingen voor de gevonden verbanden. Binnen de groep met opwaartse carrières hebben diegenen met een sterkere professionele houding meer succes. Binnen de groep met neerwaartse carrières hebben de muzikanten met een beter professioneel netwerk meer succes. Binnen de groep met stabiel succesvolle carrières zijn de meer succesvolle muzikanten diegenen die een sterkere professionele houding hebben en een beter professioneel netwerk. Tenslotte zien wij dat zelfs binnen de groep met stabiel onsuccesvolle carrières de muzikanten die meer sociale ondersteuning ervaren, een sterkere professionele houding hebben en een beter professioneel netwerk, relatief meer succes hebben.

Op basis van het consistente patroon van bevindingen concluderen wij dat sociale ondersteuning, professionele houding en professioneel netwerk essentieel zijn voor het carrièresucces van muzikanten. In navolging van eerdere onderzoeksresultaten op het gebied van sociale ondersteuning betogen wij dat het positieve effect van sociale ondersteuning op het carrièresucces van muzikanten te verklaren valt vanwege het belang van sociale ondersteuning bij het omgaan met werkgerelateerde stress en carrièreonzekerheid. Beide zijn sterk aanwezig binnen het veld van artistieke beroepen in het algemeen en de muzikant in het bijzonder. Met betrekking tot professionele houding stellen wij dat het positieve verband met carrièresucces voornamelijk kan worden verklaard vanwege de relatie van professionele houding met professioneel netwerk. Uit studie 1 bleek dat eigenschappen zoals aardig zijn, het hebben van kennis over de muziekindustrie en marketing genoemd werden als belangrijke factoren voor de carrièreontwikkeling van muzikanten. Deze verschillende eigenschappen veronderstellen allen een professionele houding. Bovendien bleek uit aanvullende analyses dat professionele houding en professioneel netwerk sterk significant gerelateerd waren. Onze bevindingen met betrekking tot het professionele netwerk verklaren wij door te wijzen op het belang van carrièrekansen die contacten in het professionele netwerk met zich meebrengen. In het algemeen kunnen wij stellen dat muzikanten er in hun carrière baat bij

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hebben als zij vertegenwoordigd worden door belangrijke tussenpersonen als een manager, een boekingskantoor, een muziekuitgever of een platen-maatschappij.

Algemene discussie

In het laatste deel van het proefschrift worden de bevindingen van de afzonderlijke studies in een breder theoretisch kader geplaatst. Hierbij worden ook de beperkingen en praktische implicaties van het onderzoek besproken.

Met enige nadruk wil ik erop wijzen dat het doel van dit onderzoek niet bestond uit het vinden van een definitieve formule voor succes. Naar mijn mening bestaat een dergelijke formule namelijk niet. In dit proefschrift is getracht om systematisch te onderzoeken of er eigenschappen zijn die succesvolle muzikanten met elkaar gemeen hebben en welke niet aanwezig zijn bij niet-succesvolle muzikanten. Met andere woorden: welke persoonsgebonden eigenschappen van invloed zijn op het carrièresucces van muzikanten? Op basis van de verschillende onderzoeken concludeer ik dat zowel achtergrond, persoonlijkheid als professionele context van belang zijn, maar dat vooral het professionele netwerk van grote invloed is op de mate van carrièresucces.

De bevindingen in dit proefschrift vormen een bijdrage aan verschillende onderzoeksvelden. Ten eerste vormt het gevonden belang van de professionele context een bevestiging van de focus van de cultuursociologie op de context waarbinnen culturele productie plaatsvindt. Daar staat echter tegenover dat ook achtergrond en persoonlijkheid een rol spelen bij de carrièreontwikkeling en dat toekomstig onderzoek op het gebied van de cultuursociologie ook hier aandacht aan zou moeten besteden om een volledig beeld te kunnen geven van de factoren die een rol spelen bij culturele productie. Ten tweede vormt dit proefschrift een aanvulling op het onderzoek binnen de arbeids- en organisatiepsychologie. Zo blijkt dat als er gekeken wordt naar een creatieve beroep, zoals het beroep van muzikant, dat er andere persoonlijkheidseigenschappen een rol blijken te spelen bij het carrièresucces. Dit wijst er op dat een creatief beroep om een ander soort persoonlijkheid vraagt dan beroepen in het meer geïnstitutionaliseerde bedrijfsleven, welke meestal onderwerp van studie zijn binnen dit onderzoeksveld. We vinden echter wel vergelijkbare resultaten met betrekking tot sociale ondersteuning, wat een aanwijzing is dat sociale ondersteuning van belang is voor de ontwikkeling van verschillende typen carrières. Uit ons onderzoek komt namelijk naar voren dat vooral het professionele netwerk van belang is voor carrièresucces. Het is daarom van belang dat onderzoekers binnen de arbeids- en organisatiepsychologie zich in hun onderzoek niet uitsluitend op persoonlijkheids-eigenschappen richten. Een eenzijdige focus op persoonlijkheid laat andere verklaringen voor het hebben van succes buiten beschouwing.

Alhoewel ook dit onderzoek niet uitputtend is in het vinden van mogelijke verklaringen van het carrièresucces van popmuzikanten hoop ik met de verschillende studies een bijdrage te hebben geleverd aan de inzichten over de factoren die van invloed zijn op het carrièresucces van popmuzikanten in Nederland.

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