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A phenomenological study: Assessing the relative contributions of interpersonal relationship building (Papinczak et al., 2015) and emotional immersion (Seligman, 2002) with respect to music and well-being.

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to assess the established contributors; interpersonal relations (Papinczak et al., 2015) and emotional immersion (Seligman, 2002) on well-being from music listening.

Existential phenomenology was used in coherence with the study, to understand how participants make sense of their lived everyday experience with music. In-depth semi structured interviews were used to gain a detailed insight in to the phenomenon on six participants aged between 18-25 years, all of whom engaged with music on an everyday basis.

Results from Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) found support for both interpersonal relations and emotional immersion through assisting formations of social identities; communication/engagement medium; connecting/sharing experiences with others; release of emotions; mood stimulation and applying pleasure to everyday activities.

Alongside these sub-themes the study identified a prominent theme, relating to both interpersonal relations and emotional immersion; the association of both positive memories and people.

These results led to the creation of a conceptual metaphor (Figure 1) to represent a visualisation of the findings, revealing enhanced well-being from music listening.

Key words:	Music	Well-being	Phenomenology	Interpersonal relations	Emotional immersion
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Introduction

Music is heavily considered as ubiquitous. It is universal; with many cultures utilising music as a highly popular leisure activity or for communication, exposing rites of passage, recreation, and composure (Good et al., 2002; Sloboda, 1994).

‘...if you’re feeling down, music can be a great healer, and if you’re feeling up it helps to keep you there.’ (Sumner, 2015, p.297)

Brain imaging studies have demonstrated that listening to music can stimulate regions such as the ventral striatum, midbrain, amygdala, ventral medial prefrontal cortex and orbitofrontal cortex, concerning our motivations, emotions and arousal (Menon & Levitin, 2005; Blood & Zatorre, 2001).

Classical music, specifically Mozart has been found to have valuable influences on task-relevant brain areas (Jausovec et al., 2006), recognisably labeled as the ‘Mozart effect’ since Rauscher’s et al. (1993) initial explanation of the discovery.

Neurological studies show that music can provide stimulation, although this is not unique to music itself; the regions mentioned previously can also be stimulated through other prompting stimuli such as food (Kelley & Berridge, 2002), sex and drug abuse. Although such studies provide brief clarification as to why some people turn to music as an everyday strategy to maintain well-being, often they do not explain how this is achieved.

A broad spectrum of ages listen to music (Statista, 2016). For example, recent statistics show that older generations (45+ year olds) regularly listen to the radio as well as spending the most money on CDs for music consumption (BPI, 2011). Taking statistics such as this in to consideration, it is significant for researchers to comprehend a range of ages within a study.

Over the past 40 years, there has been an interest in the relationships and effects of music on older generations, particularly with those suffering from Dementia (Nair et al., 2013; Baird & Samson, 2015; Matthews, 2015) and Alzheimer disease (Clair, 1996; Tromeur, 2015; El Haj et al., 2015). Hays & Minichiello (2005) recognised the considerable portion of research on older individuals that required extra care, but a shortfall regarding healthy older individuals. This directed their research towards a healthy, older population from age 60 onwards.

Thematic analysis found music for these individuals played an extremely important role in knowing and understanding emotions, in the self and others, and expressing their spirituality. A significant finding consistent in all of the interviews, was that music gave them abilities to establish meaning in their lives (Minichiello, 2005).

It is clear that accelerated advances and evolution in the landscape of technologies and services has reformulated the musical experience. Some claim this has developed our engagement with both music and artists in fashions formerly perceived as incomprehensible (Macfarlane, 2015). This is supported by Hays & Minichiello (2005),

as participants engaged in post-retirement occupations such as working for a community radio, contributed to their overall fulfillment of life.

Thus, music is transforming into a personal everyday experience for many. A personal, everyday experience that people appear to be undertaking on a significant average of four hours per day (Realwire, 2012). Due to ever growing access to music listening and the strong experiences associated (Lamont, 2011), there is much ongoing research attempting to identify the number of particular components contributing to well-being; both physiological and psychological (Gabrielsson & Lindström Wik, 2003).

Lamont (2011) aimed to explore these strong experiences of music; how music could lead to sufficient well-being through having the capabilities of achieving happiness as a direct, cost effective route; compared to the popular, highly approved healthy lifestyle route (Biddle & Ekkekakis, 2005). Seligman's (2002) well established framework for achieving a balanced well-being through three main components; pleasure, engagement and meaning, was referred and applied to music throughout Lamont's (2011) study and findings.

Analysis revealed strong, positive musical experiences had significant impacts on the individuals lives, leading to conclusions that their research supported the contention of Seligman's et al. (2002) scheme of achieving a healthy well-being.

Seligman's (2002) pleasure and engagement components can be applied to other research linking music and emotional immersion as a supporter of well-being. One of the most commonly observed links established since the period of ancient Greeks (Garrido et al., 2013), is the effect music can have on mood, emotion regulation and arousal levels (Rentfrow, 2012); Schäfer et al., 2013; McLellan, 2013; Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). When tested, prevailing findings reveal that immersion from music can alter negative states of mind to positive ones (McLellan, 2013).

It is believed there are alternative beneficial ways other than passive engagement to listen to music that could provide greater individual benefits (Weinberg & Joseph, 2017). This is said to be due to increased availability and accessibility of music, therefore engagement is able to extend further than just passive listening (Weinberg & Joseph, 2017).

Dance is one of the most ancient forms of healing (Koch et al., 2014). Since the establishment of dance related therapies such as Dance Movement Therapy (DMT), there has been an increasing appeal into dance therapies regarding their functions, goals and efficacies, particularly from the last of the 20th century onwards (Meekums, 2010). Some believe this engagement of music through active methods generally supply pronounced results due to the fact they have the potential to enhance and stimulate self-exploration, self-esteem, expression of emotions and confidence (Creech et al., 2013). Other results promote this type of expression as a motivational devise for movement, and the release of anger and aggression; which in turn, promotes healthy behaviour (Batt-Rawden & Tellnes, 2011).

Being human, means in essence we are social beings (Dwyer, 2013). This essence is driven into us through various representations; novels, songs, poems, films etc. which all characterise relationships and heavily contribute towards our levels of happiness.

Along side advances in technology, 'seismic shifts' have been found in not only the amount of time spent listening to music, but also the amount of people sharing their music and experiences with others (Realwire, 2012).

Papinczak et al. (2015), wanted to explore how and why music listening was used by young people to maintain their well-being at a period of challenging developments into adulthood. Significant findings included the constitutive role music had on building, enhancing and maintaining social relationships with family and friends. Although the researchers understood that there may be other factors as well as music that could contribute towards well-being, their findings allowed them to construct a theoretical model which was tested quantitatively for its validity and generalisability. The model comprised of four specific ways of how listening to music contributed to well-being; building relationships, modification of emotions, modifying cognitions and emotional immersion.

Social components linking music engagement with well-being are common from observed pieces of research linking the two factors. Much like that of Papinczak et al. (2015), where music facilitated aspects of well-being such as positive interactions, healthy social relations and feelings of connectivity with others. Additional research reveals similar findings including; the expression and development of social identity (North et al., 2000; Bogt et al., 2010; Rentfrow, 2012), greater perceptions of closeness to other listeners (Rentfrow, 2012); Schäfer et al., 2013; Bogt et al., 2017) and artists (Bogt et al., 2017), and music as a device for communication and social cohesion (Rentfrow, 2012); Herbert, 2011); Schäfer et al., 2013; Weinberg & Joseph, 2017).

Some claim the reformulation of musical experience has developed our engagement with both music and artists in fashions formerly perceived as incomprehensible (Macfarlane, 2015). Recognising this, partnered with evidence from previous research, it seems plausible to assume music is transforming into an important personal everyday experience for many, considered a 'universal social phenomenon' (Rentfrow, 2012, p.402).

This clarifies the phenomenological approach for this present study. Described as 'transcendental phenomenology', Edmund Husserl; the establisher of phenomenology as a philosophical movement (Smith, 2015), had a principle goal to provide a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of our everyday experiences (Manen, 1990). The realities are not viewed as independent to the human experience, but made up of these natures and meanings, perceived by the consciousness (Harrison et al., 2011), as we live and experience them (Valle & King, 1978).

Existential phenomenology explores the rudimentary concepts of the lifeworld. Although individual experiences are unique and specific to oneself, all lifeworlds have underlying characteristics that are universal (Smith, 2015); lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived relation (Manen, 1997). Transcendental phenomenology typically describes the lived world from an outsiders point of view, whereas in existential phenomenology the individual is viewed as an 'active and creative subject' (Jun, 2011), p.94), not only passively being a subject to environmental impacts, but navigating their lifeworld (Smith, 2015) through interpretations of the meanings behind their inner experiences.

After a review of literature available on phenomenological methods exploring music listening, a significant percentage have a primary focus enhancing knowledge with emphasis on links to health for medical implications or educational contexts (Forinash & Gonzalez, 1989; McLellan et al., 2013; Baker, 2013; Skånland, 2013; Balzani et al., 2014). Therefore, there is a slight yet important gap in literature based upon phenomenological methods exploring everyday effects of music and exploration of contributors well-being.

The purpose of this study is to disinter the naturalistic, everyday, pre-phenomenological understanding of the explored phenomenon, music. In doing so, there will be a predetermined focus particularly on two established components of well-being determined from music; interpersonal relations (Papinczak et al., 2015) and emotional immersion (Seligman, 2002). Components which have previously appeared in two separate theoretical models include; interpersonal relations as a factor in a model linking music listening with well-being (Papinczak et al., 2015), and emotional immersion as one of three components in a model of well-being proposed by Seligman (2002). This study aims to test the importance and contributions of these two factors, assessing how they advance well-being.

With an escalation of people listening to music in numerous different ways and for an increased amount of time (Realwire, 2012), this study could lead to further research into the field of music and well-being in everyday contexts. Perhaps as a self-help function to strengthen well-being. Moreover, this research could bring about more investigation into the effects of music on well-being for educational contexts, in order to supplement behaviour and achievement in schools or colleges.

Methodology

Qualitative design was chosen in accordance to appropriation of the study; being phenomenological, specifying in 'conscious experience' (Harrison et al., 2011, p.662). Qualitative designs enable retrieval of the highest potential significant data based on the chosen topic, through the participants understandings and accounts of a phenomenon (Smith, 2015). Epistemology accounts for the attitude towards the nature of the data (Smith, 2015). This study uses epistemological relativism as a means to explore frameworks of cognitions, affected by the directions of life and socio-cultural circumstances, making a difference towards how we approach things (Lawson, 2003).

Participants

A phenomenological qualitative approach commonly uses in-depth studies (Harrison, et al., 2011) of a small number of participants (Smith, 2015). This is a useful tool to identify particular information from subjects who undergo and live distinct experiences (Bortolan, 2016). Therefore, a purposive sample was selected, aiding achievement of the phenomenological design, where the in-depth analysis helped make sense of the essences of individual experiences (Plakhotnik, 2016; Harrison, et al., 2011).

Various accounts of shared experiences may significantly advance understanding of their essential structure, as it provides an insight into numerous forms of the human experience (Husserl, 1989; Bortolan, 2016). The participants used in the study were homogeneous cases, sharing the common experience of the phenomenon music, interacting with it on a regular basis through various accounts i.e. casually, alongside leisurely activities or through musical practices.

Six participants were used as an adequate sample size enabling generous amount of data (Plakhotnik, 2016), as well as compliance with the phenomenological approach (Morse, 2000; Guest et al., 2006).

The chosen age range of the participants was 18-25 years, which avoided cases of vulnerability, and simplified processes of obtaining informed consent. Additionally, this age range is exposed to a wide range of music developments (Lamont, 2011), allowing heightened potential for communications of music, through broadenings of musical taste, and attendance of live events (Greasley, 2008). Additionally, Papinczak et al. (2015) used this age range due to high rates of mental health problems and disorders associated. In England, 7,500 people develop surfacing psychosis yearly, with 75% of mental health issues emerging before 25 years (Mental Health Network, 2011).

Recruitment of respondents was accomplished through opportunity sampling and snowball sampling, using an invitation email (APPX 2). These sampling techniques are based on convenience. The participants were individuals amenable towards the study as well as being accessible at the time of data collection. Attaining respondents through these techniques was successful due to large percentages of the population in the UK actively listening to four hours of music on average per day (Realwire, 2012). This implies the criteria for the participants needed for the study would be applicable and relatable to many.

Data Collection

Informal, semi-structured interviews are a prevalent strategy for qualitative data collection (Smith, 2015). This allowed exploration of emerging matters (Harrison et al., 2011), gathering the individuals perspectives on the given phenomenon in their own words (Patton, 2002; Plakhotnik, 2016), some of which had not been previously anticipated, making the respondent the experimental expert (Smith, 2008).

Before any of the interviews could take place, ethical considerations were premeditated. Ethical forms (APPX 1) were completed and approved by Manchester Metropolitan University, also strictly following British Psychological Society (BPS) standards.

In phenomenological methods, the presence of the researcher is considered a meaningful position. As a participant observer (Giorgi, 1971), within semi-structured interviews, researchers' inevitability influence the form and content of their findings to a certain degree (Fischer & Wertz, 1979). Thus, an interview guide (APPX 5) provided open, leading questions as a guidepost for discussion, as well as guaranteeing all major topics were sufficiently covered. Predetermining topics encourages thorough concentration on what the respondent is saying, grasping the purposeful position of the phenomenological approach.

The questions (APPX 5) were also formed using the phenomenological concept of lifeworld existentials (Manen, 1997). Existential dimensions comprise of lived time, lived space, lived body and lived relation (Manen, 1997). This helped form the basis of the questions to aid understanding and exploration of the world through the lived experience (Cameron et al., 2016) and for this study, music.

As this study assessed particularly interpersonal relations (Papinczak et al., 2015) and emotional immersion (Seligman, 2002), the questions largely focused on two of the lifeworld existentials. Lived body, referring to how we feel, conceal and share the experiences through our body, and lived relations, referring to relationships we retain with others in the 'interpersonal space' shared with them (Cameron et al., 2016, p.114).

Informants were addressed by invitation email (APPX 2), communicating the reason they had been contacted and invited to take part in an interview. This would comprise of an open discussion regarding the meaning of music in their lives and how music could be effecting their well-being.

Data Analysis

Following the interviews, transcripts were generated from audio recordings verbatim. The text was analysed according to the phenomenological approach, using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, 2008; Smith & Osborn, 2014; Smith, 2015). Phenomenology is recognised as the first philosophical pillar of IPA (Cartwright, 2011), incorporating thorough explorations of participants' psychological lifeworld, making it a favorable method for this project.

IPA has a primary focal point of providing detailed exploration, descriptions and interpretations of particular experiences (Harrison et al., 2011); Smith, 2015), attempting to comprehend content and complexity of meanings (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Consequently, an interpretive relationship was formed between the transcripts and the researcher, allowing apprehension of the participants mental and social world (Smith, 2015). This relationship was crucial as not all of the meanings discovered were conspicuous; weighty engagement with transcripts and operations of interpretation were essential (Smith & Osborn, 2007; Smith, 2015).

The process of the analysis in this study followed guidance from a step-by-step approach in IPA by Smith (2008, 2015). Initial familiarisation with the data was formed through repeated reading of the transcripts, annotating significant sections in the left margin and documenting arising feasible themes in the right margin (APPX 6).

These annotations later advanced into a foundational table of general themes, used to identify connections, relationships or differentiations between them. Influenced by the aims of the study, a final table containing three key themes was distinguished (Table 1). Within these, sub-themes were identified alongside line numbers of each relevant transcript to refer to for discussion.

Ethical considerations

Systems of ethical consideration have become ingrained in the majority of research institutions (Wiles, 2013). Accordingly, ethical forms (APPX 1) were completed and approved by Manchester Metropolitan University, satisfying BPS standards. During data collection, there was no risk of maleficence. As the subject of research was music listening and how it effects well-being, no distress was thought to be caused by the interview questions. However social science research is never risk free (Boulton et al., 2004), therefore resource contact details were provided on the Information Sheet (APPX 3).

Snowball sampling often means the researcher may be unfamiliar with the participant. Consequently, interviews were held in a public environment, avoiding risk of harm. There was no deception during the study; the studies aims and objectives were clearly provided before data collection through the Information sheet (APPX 3). This enabled comprehension of the essence, intensions, and foreseen consequences of research participation (British Psychological Society, 2009).

Consent forms (APPX 4) were provided to highlight the following factors; knowledge of recording and containment of data, rights to withdraw, anonymity (through pseudonyms for both participants and any names mentioned), understanding that information collected may be published and used within other educational circumstances; confidentiality of the data, unless there is a believed risk of harm, and overall consent to take part.

Analysis and Discussion

After repeated engagement with the transcripts, initial annotation later developed into Table 1 below. Consequently, detailed analysis and discussion lead to the development of a final, interpretive model.

Table 1
Themes and superordinate themes from transcripts with line numbers from each participant transcript

Themes	Subthemes	Participants					
		G	S	E	B	M	D
Interpersonal Relations	1. communication/engagement medium	1. 35-38 2. 135-	1. 57-60 2. 3.	1. 45-47 2. 54-58 3.	1. 2. 62-64 3. 78-79, 88-	1. 83-85, 103-105 2. 72-74, 90-93 3. 67-69, 80-81, 113-114	1. 2. 46-47, 49-51, 65-66 3. 46-47, 55-57, 60-62
	2. formation of social identities	139 3. 33-35,			92, 99-102 3.		
	3. connecting/sharing experiences with others	103 -	124				
Emotional Immersion	1. release of emotions - through dance	1. 72-73, 68-70,	1. 47-49 2. 12-13	1. 62-64 2. 15-25	1. 42-45, 48-51	1. 2. 37-44, 107-110 3. 8-	1. 38-41 2. 14-16, 23-30 3. 8-10
	2. mood stimulator device	2. 44-47 3. 22-	3. 6-7	3. 7-14	2. 17-21 3. 81-85	11, 24-26	
	3. apples pleasure to everyday activities / or work	23, 56-62					
Association of positive memories and people	1. Association of positive memories	1. 56-62 2.	1. 33-38 2. 18-	1. 77-83 2. 42-47, 59-62	1. 22-25 2.	1. 50-69 2. 50-69	1. 17-18 2. 34-35
	2. Association with people		20, 29-30, 60-63				

Interpersonal Relations

Relationships, whether they are casual acquaintances or close intimate friends, have been described as fundamental to 'ontological security', providing solid senses of an agentic self, a belonging in the social world, and elemental trust in others (Jamieson & Milne, 2012).

- Communication / engagement medium

The interviews showed music as a topic of communication with others. It created a sense of relation to the other person/people, with one participant revealing it was an effective topic of conversation even with new acquaintances.

'...it's a good starting point with strangers sometimes...and sometimes you can tell a lot about a person... it's you know, it's as if it's a universal language kind of thing.'
– Max

Through discussion of musical preferences, this quote suggests that assumptions towards the other person are formed, implying music preference can act as a structure of self-expression. This is consistent to Rentfrow and Gosling's (2006) study where after only listening to a targets hierarchy of favourite songs, judges were able to form valid perceptions of the targets personalities and values.

Another participant used music as a topic of conversation, as a means to reminisce and re-encounter their common interests of music with others.

'...me and my friend Jake, we love both love Michael Jackson, so we would obviously always talk about the times that we used to watch him when we were a kid and we would still talk about that now...' – Sally

Clear mental benefits have been found from reminiscing and reflection; proving to be important for the development of self-image, personal identity, self-expression, and relating to others (Conway & Pleydell-Pearce, 2000).

- Assisting the formation of Social Identity

Music has been described as having a 'badge' function; in that through music, young people display and define themselves as a certain type of person (identity), and/or belonging to certain groups i.e. social identity (Bogt et al., 2010; Frith, 1983; Hargreaves et al., 2002; Tarrant et al., 2002). Evidence on older generations show they are less likely to use music as an identity 'badge' (Lonsdale & North, 2011), however for younger generations, music preferences aid the presentation of the self; how they would like to be perceived (Rentfrow, 2012) and how others may be perceived (Knobloch et al., 2000).

'...'cause everyone's got their own taste, that makes them unique, and different. So I think for some people that's important, to have that sense of self...' – Declan

Lonsdale & North's (2011) research implies that older generations are less prone to use musical 'badges' due to weakened urgencies to self-express or finding more efficient ways of doing so. Yet in contrast, one participant attached a 'badge' to their father, automatically associating him with Jazz music.

'...jazz is kind of an extension of my dad's personality, so even though some of the jazz that I go to see with him, I wouldn't really listen to myself... it's an experience with my dad, it's like enjoyable by proxy almost, or it's just like part of his personality.' – Greg

Although this would suggest Greg is not a large Jazz fan himself, his association and experience of Jazz with his Father leads to an inevitable appreciation, strengthening social and emotional connections.

- *Connecting/sharing experiences*

Presumptions on music and social bonding suggest that shared preferences indicate similarities in both values and temperaments. Those who enjoy the same music are likely to view the world in a similar manner, often leading to more agreements, compared to those who have different musical preferences (Rentfrow, 2012).

'...like your peers and your social circles. It's just a way of relating to each other.'
– Duncan

Along with sharing music preferences, results found a recognised intention and effort to please others with particular types of music intended for specific individuals. Papinczak et al. (2015, p.111) describes this as an 'implied intimacy', that is discerningly shared with those perceived as close.

'...when you share you get it back, you receive, like giving a gift, it's like Christmas everyday ... I guess it's that effort that that person goes to say "I've listened to that and I feel that you would like that".'
– Bill

Within this theme, participants repeated that even if the other person was a stranger, there was a comfort in their shared passion for the same music. This is also reflected in research from Selfhout et al. (2009), whereby adolescents who were not friends in the first year of school but shared musical preferences, were likely to become mutual friends by the second year, compared to those with dissimilar preferences.

'...whoever you are, whoever the other person is, you can both appreciate the same thing, you can enjoy it together.'
– Greg

A reflection of the growing access and sharing of music through advancements of technology was mentioned with reference to the online social-networking website *Facebook*. A website often also used by participants in the study by Papinczak et al. (2015).

'...there's a lot of people on *Facebook* who I share music with and I'll get tagged in stuff. I'm in a group actually called 'Beats, Rhymes and Life' ... there's like 60 people in that group who just post songs and I'm constantly posting in there as well...'
– Bill

Musical events are also a popular activity for people to share an experience with chosen others. One participant mentioned that it gave them the opportunity to connect with others:

'...going to gigs. That's a shared experience. You rarely go by yourself ... it's a social bonding thing.' – Greg

After describing a memory from a gig, another participant specified how they felt during that period. It seems plausible that if one is sharing an experience, they are likely to share similar feelings, which effectively, is likely to enhance the relationship with that other person/s (Schäfer et al., 2013).

'...it was a momentous feeling and it was a great moment being there with the others... it was a collective feeling.' – Max

Emotional Immersion

As mentioned throughout, emotional immersion is a prominent finding across research concerning well-being (Seligman, 2002) and music (Rentfrow, 2012; Schäfer et al., 2013; McLellan, 2013; Juslin & Sloboda, 2010).

- *Mood stimulator device*
- All six of the participants mentioned they often use music to encourage or trigger certain types of moods. This sub-theme was unsurprising due to the consistency of previous research on music on well-being; proving music has strong effects on moods, the preponderance revealing immersion in music has the ability to change negative states to positive ones (North et al., 2000; Bogt et al., 2010; Batt-Rawden & Tellnes, 2011; Schäfer et al., 2013).

'You can sometimes listen to music, and [...] be swayed or put in a mood by it...that kind of helps with how you're feeling, and the emotions for that particular day...' – Duncan

'...but most of the time I put music on because [...] it wakes me up for the day...' – Sally

The above quote shows that music is used as a motivational device, to enliven the participant for the day ahead. This result is also found in Batt-Rawden's et al. (2011) article, where music was a motivational device for moving bodies and could therefore be used for health promotion.

In juxtaposition to this, some participants mentioned that music evoked negative emotions.

'I had to stop listening to 'Third' by 'Portishead', because it was just making, it was just, it was such a depressing album, so bleak...that coupled with the sort of 17-year-old angst, wasn't a good combo.' – Greg

This participant detected that the music was powerful and impactful enough to determine later unfavourable, negative emotions. Some may view this as an unhelpful component to well-being, however research has proved that enhanced abilities to become conversant of one's emotions can be refined by repeated engagement with

music. Music supplies a secure platform for exploration of emotions, positive or negative (Huron, 2006).

- *Applying pleasure to everyday activities*

All of the participants specified they use music in collaboration with their everyday activities such as travel, work and reading. It is assumed that this use of music is prompted by the desire to escape or disassociate oneself from everyday tasks they must endure (Batt-Rawden & Tellnes, 2011; Herbert, 2011). One participant described it as “filling a void” (Bill, 84). Researchers make sense of this by referring to senses of derealisation (Herbert, 2011).

‘...I listen to music every time I’m walking somewhere, if I’m alone.’ – Duncan

‘...obviously when you’re travelling, like on the train or bus, or walking to work or whatever, you turn music on, its more of an experience...’ – Greg

One participant declared they listen to music whilst doing work as it stimulates creative ideas. Although similar to the sub-theme ‘mood stimulator device’, this participant found themselves completely immersed in music, which caused a distraction:

‘...I’ve got to be careful when working when putting it in the background sometimes, I myself get distracted by it and I end up listening to it instead of actually doing the work...’ – Max

Previous research has echoed this sentiment revealing music can be relatively distracting, particularly when driving or crossing the street, due to disruption of auditory signals (Schwebel et al., 2012).

- *Release of emotions*

Music is known to be a strong pleasurable stimulus (Dubé & Le Bel, 2003), possessing the abilities to evoke strong emotions (Koelsch, 2014). One participant revealed a term coined to describe the intensity of music he experienced as a teenager:

‘...we used to call it “music-asm” [*laughs*] which is like, when there’s like a peak or a moment in a song that makes you feel like a physical sort of reaction, sort of like [...] like an orgasm, hence the term, “music-asm” ...’ – Greg

– *Through dance*

Due to advanced accessibilities and availabilities of music listening, music engagement can be experienced through alternative ways over passive listening (Weinberg & Joseph, 2017), such as through dance.

In recent years, research has found a high appreciation for Dance and Urban music genres (Bogt et al., 2010). These genres have been labeled as rhythmic and energising (Delsing et al., 2008), making them considerable contributors for well-being intensifiers (Bogt et al., 2010). This explains the establishment of dance related therapies, namely DMT, to treat an array of behavioural, psychological and medical conditions (Koch et al., 2014).

'...I listen to more Dance music, which is Dance music for a reason, because you dance [...] obviously like to express yourself to the music, and that's something I really enjoy doing, it's something that can easily come out of me without drugs, without booze...' – Bill

Another participant described dancing to music as a release of emotions, feelings and thoughts:

'...I feel you can dance and you can just like let things off your chest, and not worry about things as much, so it is a release of some kind...' – Emily

It is this idea that leads to the development of dance therapy, as research testing its effectiveness show it is beneficial for improvements to quality of life; subjective well-being; positive moods; affect and body image (Koch et al., 2014).

Association with positive memories and people

This study aimed to assess the contributions of interpersonal relations and emotional immersion from music on well-being. From the previous themes discussed, both of these contributions were found to have predominantly positive effects on well-being.

The majority of the memories the participants associated with music were episodic memories. Participants took themselves back to the time of a musical experience for example a gig or a club night. For some, the music acted as a reminder of this positive experience:

'...if I [*want to*] reminisce about something I've enjoyed I might listen to Neil Young... when he was playing a mad guitar solo, and it made us quite emotional...' – Duncan

[*After describing an experience at a club*] '...they always used to play like old school Hip Hop... or this other one called, 'Roses Are Red' ... so whenever those songs come on, we always do like a little routine... it reminds us of us dancing together...' – Sally

It is clear here that certain songs or artists provoke the positive emotion, nostalgia. A result discovered amongst other research, where past popular songs evoked autobiographical memories and strong positive emotions (Janata et al., 2007). Not only does this type of episodic recall generate positive emotions, it also acts as a memory enhancer for these particular events (Buchanan, 2007; Jäncke, 2008).

Another association became clear between certain songs or artists and interpersonal relations. One participant discussed how they identify and relate certain songs to their recently deceased father:

'...like all dad's favourite songs I like listen to them 'cause it associates me with him...' – Sally

A meta-analysis of music therapy used on bereaved youth was found to be the most successful intervention for support on the individual suffering (Rosner et al., 2010), however the above quote presents a self-care strategy. This has previously been described as ways adults can use personal significant songs to connect and reintegrate their past selves and others with oneself in the present (DeNora, 2000).

Additional evidence of the association between music and specific people is also evident from a separate participant:

‘...like my mum will say like “oh do you remember this song reminds me of you from when we were at that gig”, or when I’ve been at parties at a close family friends house, there’s a couple of songs that remind me of being there and them guys...’ – Emily

This type of mental connection has a similar effect to the episodic memories. Specific songs or artists act as a reminder of the positive experience, as well as assisting the individual in remembering the connection with specific people, and the shared experience they had together. This result is consistent to the findings of previous research, where music causes increased feelings of connectivity (Papinczak et al., 2015), and greater perceptions of closeness to other listeners (Rentfrow, 2012; Schäfer et al., 2013; Bogt et al., 2017).

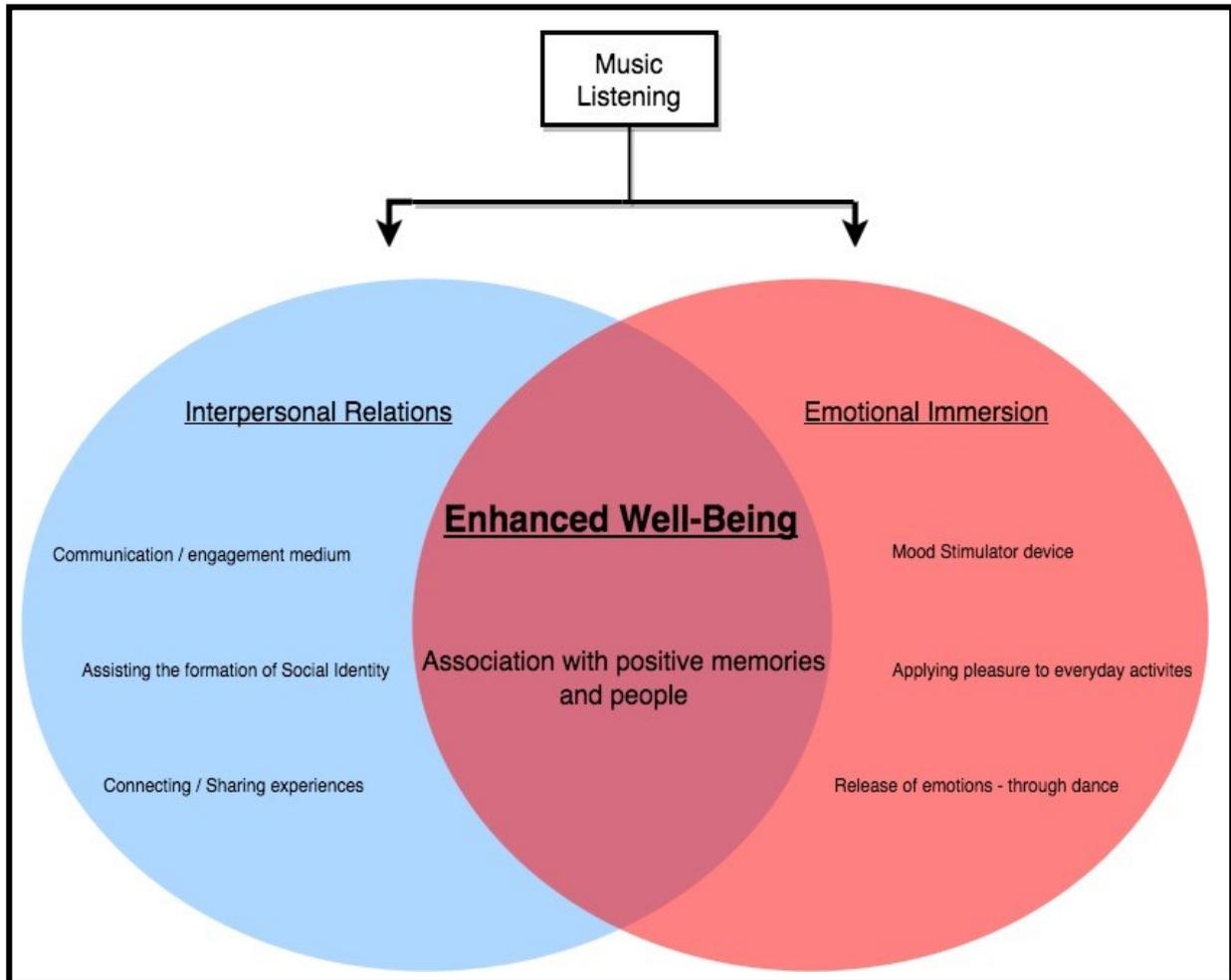


Figure 1: Conceptual metaphor displaying how music can enhance well-being, through the contributors; interpersonal relations and emotional immersion.

The above metaphor represents the findings from the present study. The final theme; 'Association with positive memories and people', represents Interpersonal relations and Emotional immersion, hence the use of a Venn diagram to demonstrate this. The interaction of the third theme was found to lead to the achievement of enhanced well-being.

This study aimed to analyse the respective contributions of interpersonal relationship building (Papinczak et al., 2015) and emotional immersion (Seligman, 2002) with respect to music and well-being. With the use of an existential phenomenological perspective investigating the conceptualisation of the lifeworld; the existential dimensions; and particularly lived body and lived relation (Manen, 1997), this in turn aided the comprehension of how music can supplement well-being.

This research could be used for the support of music therapy; an interpersonal process where music is used to help patients improve, restore and maintain health (Bruscia, 1991). It could be particularly useful in educational contexts, as music therapy is believed to be ideal for children (Wetherick, 2014). In addition to educational contexts, this research could be applied to the general public, aiding the understanding and

manipulation of music for their own well-being, as a self-care strategy and a technology of health (Ruud, 2010).

Limitations

This study should not be used as a representative of all younger individuals, but to demonstrate a need for further study in to the effects of music, representative of younger populations. As there are continuing advancements of technology relating to music, quantitative tests on the model and results could enhance the generalisability and applicability of the results to a further field of people. This could then ascertain differences within factors such as age, gender, ethnicities and social classes.

Due to the accessibility for data collection, this study is extremely Westernised. In order to tackle this problem, tests on the effects of music on well-being across different countries could enhance the ethnocentricity of the research.

Reflexive Analysis

Reflexivity in qualitative research is frequently identified as a crucial strategy contributing to the process of the gathered data (Ahmed et al., 2011; D'Cruz et al., 2007; Gerstl-Pepin & Patrizion, 2009) and transparencies of the study (Smith, 2015).

The idea of study stemmed from the researcher's personal interest in music due to an influential upbringing revolving heavily around music, attending festivals and concerts, and listening to various genres of music. Therefore, the researcher has witnessed firsthand the benefits of music; from sharing experiences with others and strengthening relationships, to the influence of music for personal benefit.

This could effect the results in numerous ways. Through opportunity sampling, some participants knew of the researcher and their interests, potentially shaping responses to the questions thus overly supportive to the findings of the study. The interest and importance of music to the researcher could lead to an attentional bias towards the data collected, although as this limitation was already considered, any negative points on music were purposefully acknowledged by the researcher. The researcher's prior interest in music also benefitted points made by participants, as they were sufficiently understood, enabling effective elaboration when required.

In compliance with ethics, interviews took place in a public environment of the participants' choice. Employing choice made the researcher adopt a 'back seat' approach in setting the scene and atmosphere of the interview. This led to participants feeling a measure of control over the process. People usually feel more comfortable in an environment they are familiar with (Smith, 2015), and in turn responses were more detailed and in depth.

As some participants were acquaintances of the researcher, this rapport encouraged discussion and allowed for relatable responses. Moreover, participants gathered from snowball sampling did not restrict their length and depth of response, potentially due to the relatable and non sensitive topic of the research.

The familiarisation of some of the participants had no effect on treatment of the analysis. Dingwall (1992) expressed reducing biases in qualitative research is through the incorporation of different perspectives. This analytic technique is referred to as 'fair dealing', ensuring equal considerations and viewpoints of each transcript. This was taken into consideration when identifying common themes throughout all transcripts, and attention was equally applied to any account deemed to be distinct to the individual.

Meaning

Qualitative research commonly focuses on meaning (Smith, 2015); based on the assumption that knowledge as meaning is correlative and a creation of interactions between both the researcher and the researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Streubert & Carpenter, 1999; Smith, 2015).

From the Information Sheet (APPX 3) and consent forms (APPX 4), participants were aware of the general aims of the study. Knowing what the study is aiming to explore may have lead participants to recall details bias to the study, hindering any possible underlying data. Attentional biases could also be made by the researcher, having a prior opinion towards the results. However, acknowledging this aspect before the analysis of interviews supported an open approach towards the data.

Specificity

Specificity refers to the degrees and potentials of analysis made from pieces of research. Heightened specificity causes the retrieval of only relevant items (Booth, 2016), therefore, it is important to consider before analysis.

In terms of the level of analysis made with the data collected, IPA requires significant engagement with the transcripts (Smith, 2015), an element extensively undertaken by the researcher. As the researcher had a prior interest in music and prior assumptions towards the direction of results, it could be argued that bias conclusions have been made. In spite of this, specificity was contemplated before analysis and both individual experiences or general findings were carefully considered equally.

Specificity also concerns the applicability of qualitative research. This study used a homogeneous sample; all participants obtained a common interest in music and engaged with it everyday. Although research finds increased engagement with music (Realwire, 2012), this analysis can not account for everyone and this element must be considered within conclusion of the study.

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