LUNDS UNIVERSITET

INSTITUTIONEN FÖR PSYKOLOGI

SV: Om musik berör oss, kan den få oss att gå vidare?
En kvalitativ studie om musiker och musikens roll relaterat till
emotionsreglering och coping

EN: If music moves us, can it make us move on?
A qualitative study on musicians and the role of music in
relation to emotion regulation and coping

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Bachelor's Thesis, Spring 2020

Abstract

In the field of music psychology, many studies have suggested that music can influence emotions. This qualitative study aimed to explore the emotional and cognitive effects and usage of music by musicians, especially pertaining to coping and regulating emotions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with ten musicians. The data were analysed using thematic analysis under a critical realist paradigm, resulting in six themes: (1) *Music as channel for emotions*, (2) *Music and stress/anxiety*, (3) *Music as a separate world*, (4) *Music as a calling*, (5) *Music as communication*, (6) *The power of music*. Results suggested that music is used by musicians as a tool to express and regulate emotions similar to previously defined strategies such as 'situation modification', 'attentional deployment', 'cognitive shift' or 'response modulation'. In terms of coping, music seemed to sometimes cause stress, but also decrease distress through both emotion-focused and problem-focused coping. Other effects include a better subjective understanding of emotions and increased fellowship. Further research could compare musicians with non-musicians and should delve into the psychological mechanisms behind these effects, as well as study how music communicates emotions and concepts and affects attitudes.

Keywords: Musicians, Music, Coping, Emotion, Emotion Regulation

Sammanfattning

Inom musikpsykologi har många studier antytt att musik kan påverka emotioner. Denna kvalitativa studie sökte att utforska de emotionella och kognitiva effekterna samt användningar av musik av musiker, särskilt gällande coping och reglering av emotioner. Semi-strukturerade intervjuer utfördes med tio musiker. Datan analyserades genom användning av tematisk analys under ett kritisk realistiskt paradigm, med sex teman som resultat: (1) *musik som kanal för känslor*, (2) *musik och stress/ångest*, (3) *musik som en separat värld*, (4) *musik som en kallelse*, (5) *musik som kommunikation*, (6) *kraften i musik*. Resultat tyder på att musik används av musiker som ett verktyg till att uttrycka och reglera emotioner på sätt som liknar tidigare definierade strategier såsom 'situation modification', 'attentional deployment', 'cognitive shift' eller 'response modulation'. Gällande coping så verkar musik ibland orsaka stress men också minska ångest genom både emotionsfokuserad och problemfokuserad coping. Andra effekter inkluderar en bättre subjektiv förståelse av emotioner och ökat gemenskap. Ytterligare forskning skulle kunna jämföra musiker med icke-musiker och borde gräva djupare in i de psykologiska mekanismerna bakom dessa effekter, såväl som att studera hur musik kommunicerar emotioner och begrepp samt påverkar attityder.

Nyckelord: Musiker, Musik, Coping, Emotion, Emotionsreglering

Introduction

Music is a phenomenon that has long been a part of human history. Shakespeare, famously known for playing with words, wrote the line "If music be the food of love, play on". Here, music is metaphorically described as nourishment for something as highly valued as love, and presumably not done by accident. Indeed, it has been shown in previous research that there is a connection between emotions and listening to music. Naturally, there also seems to exist a perhaps even stronger connection between emotions and playing or singing music. A previous study, which encompassed interviews with choral singers that experiencing and expressing emotions is a central part of music-making (Parker, 2011). One field in psychology that is still being explored, is how music - playing, listening and creating it - is potentially being used as a tool for regulating emotions and as a coping strategy. It is still unexplored in which ways music is being actively used in terms of dealing with negative emotions and stressful demands. This qualitative study, based on interviews with musicians, aims to explore the ways in which they use music as a strategy for emotion regulation and coping.

Previous Research and Theory

Emotions

Some musical experiences can be life changing and emotions seem to be part of the reason why (Schäfer, Smukalla & Oelker, 2014). It has been shown that the emotional responses to music typically precede music-related visual imagery, which suggests that the emotional responses thereby are more direct when perceiving music stimuli (Day & Thompson 2019). Presumably, if music can affect emotions, then music can potentially be used to regulate emotions. According to Warrenberg (2020), there is no consensus about the definition of an emotion. Instead, there are several theories and models of emotions. Gross (1998), drawing upon William James, defines emotions as behavioral and physiological response tendencies caused by evolutionary significant situations. According to Chen (2010), "An emotion refers to appraisals (i.e. perception of evaluation) of an outside event(s) as good or bad, and it may involve feelings, physical reactions, facial expression and thoughts." McRae and Gross (2020) define emotions as time-limited, situationally bound, and valenced (positive or negative) states.

Although there is a variety in views concerning the concept of emotions, there are some general similarities that binds the concept. One of those similarities is that emotions can

vary in terms of their consequences and duration as well as the proposition that such variables can be modulated, either consciously or unconsciously. For example, one can perform breathing exercises when one is angry or afraid in order to calm down more quickly. Such attempts to influence one's own emotions fall under the concept of emotion regulation (ER) (Gross, 1998). Similarly, turning to music stimuli could have an analogous potentiality of performing breathing exercises.

Emotion Regulation

According to McRae & Gross (2020), "Emotion regulation (ER) focuses on people's attempts to influence emotions, defined as time-limited, situationally bound, and valenced (positive or negative) states." The extended process model (EPM) of emotion regulation was formulated as a further development of the old process model, constructed by Gross in 1998, in order to better explain, not only how emotion regulation works, but also why people use the ER strategies that they do and what challenges individuals often deal with in the process (Gross, 2015).

EPM states that emotions come about in a sequence of events, in which each step can be regulated. According to the process model, this starts with a situation which is psychologically relevant, such as meeting a friend, resulting in attention being paid to the situation and an appraisal being made that then guides the emotional response (Gross, 2015). ER can involve tending to the situation either through 'situation selection', where one acts to seek out or avoid certain emotional situations before they happen, or through 'situation modification', where one alters the situation in order to modify its emotional impact (Gross 2015). Another way of regulating one's emotions include 'attentional deployment', which includes acts such as distracting oneself and other ways of directing attention in order to influence one's emotions (Gross, 2015). Changing one's appraisal of a situation, or 'cognitive change', as in the case of making a reappraisal, together with 'response modulation', refer to ER where one tries to alter how one reacts and feels in the context of an emotional response, for example through the aforementioned breathing exercises (Gross, 2015).

Music and Emotion Regulation

While the process model explains how emotion regulation works in general, mood management theory gives an explanation of why and how music might be a part of the emotion regulation process. According to mood management theory (Zillmann, 1988) people will seek out messages (in whatever form) that increase positive or pleasant moods and

decrease negative or unpleasant moods. This includes what kind of music people seek out and listen to (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002). The theory also allows that people may temporarily abstain from seeking out pleasurable media (and indeed seek out unpleasurable experiences) if other long-term benefits are expected (Zillmann, 2000).

While moods and emotions are different constructs in psychology, Chen (2010) argues that mood management theory concerns itself with the study of emotions. Mood management theory can therefore be used to study the relationship between music and emotion regulation. Research based on mood management theory relevant to this issue has been performed. One study found that people may listen to sad music, despite this not improving their mood, in order to resolve or learn from events in the past. This is in line with the part of theory that says that people may consume messages which results in negative emotions if there are other benefits to be found from doing so (Garrido and Schubert, 2011b). Another study found that people in bad moods are more likely to listen to energetic and joyful music, which is what the theory predicts (Knobloch & Zillmann, 2002).

The use and effects of music in terms of emotion regulation are likely to vary from individual to individual depending on personality and environmental factors. One meta-analysis has found that people high in neuroticism (low in emotional stability) are more likely to use music for emotion regulation (Miranda & Blais-Rochette, 2018). According to another study (Thoma, Scholz, Ehlert, & Nater, 2012), while time spent listening to music is not correlated with physiological and psychological functioning, the reason for listening to music was linked to both kinds of functioning. Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham (2007) found that neurotic, introverted and non-conscientious individuals were more likely to use music for emotion regulation while people with higher IQ and those who are open and intellectually engaged were more likely to find music to be an intellectual experience. According to Garrido and Schubert (2011a), individual differences affect whether one enjoys listening to sad music; they found that people who score high in absorption and music empathy are more likely to enjoy sad music. In a follow-up study they found that sad music can have both healthy outcomes, such as finding resolution when reflecting or grieving over past events, and unhealthy effects, for example by being used for ruminating on past negative events (Garrido & Schubert, 2011b).

Even though there have been several studies on music usage in regards to emotion regulation, there seem to have been far less research done in the way music is (or is not) used as a part of coping strategies.

Differentiation between Emotion Regulation and Coping

These constructs of coping and emotion regulation sometimes tend to be confused. Thereby it is worth looking at the differentiation of these two constructs. One can look at their shared feature. In the literature, they overlap in that they are regulatory processes. However, in coping, the regulation occurs in response to a stressor whereas ER takes place as a response to the presence of an emotion, independently of its cause (Compas, 2017). Baltazar and Saarikallio (2016) found a considerable degree of inconsistency in the use of these terms in music psychology, specifically in research on affect self-regulation through music.

ER consists of several biopsychosocial processes, and is defined as "the extrinsic and intrinsic processes responsible for monitoring, evaluating, and modifying emotional reactions, especially their intensive and temporal features, to accomplish one's goals (Thompson, 1994)". While emotion regulation is more ongoing, and can occur both under stressful and non-stressful events, coping is situational and tied to a specific event. Therefore, "coping is both a narrower and broader construct than emotion regulation (Compas, 2017)". Their main differences is that coping focuses on managing stressors as they occur, while emotion regulation focuses on shifting and managing the emotion itself and can take place needlessly of a specific event (Compas, 2014).

According to Gross (1998), coping research is a precursor to ER research. While coping strategies include emotion-focused coping, the study of ER distinguishes itself by focusing on both positive and negative emotions and by doing it in more detail. Coping instead focuses only on decreasing negative emotions, while also including non-emotional goals and actions (Gross, 1998).

Coping Strategies

The current study is grounded in Lazarus's and Folkman's (1984) definition of coping as "constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person." Namely, coping is regarded as a process in which a coping strategy is evaluated by three major factors: the action one takes, examined within a specific context, and the change of

thoughts when evaluating the stressful situation. Furthermore, in considering coping as situational, no strategy is inherently better than the other. Therefore, coping should not be confused by the outcome of the coping strategy being used. Unlike emotions, coping is something that can proceed for a long period of time, for example while grieving the loss of a loved one.

Coping strategies can enter different categories. Lazarus and Folkman (1980) categorized coping strategies as either *problem-focused* coping or *emotion-focused* coping, where the former is directed at the problem causing the distress and the latter at regulating the emotional response to the problem. Emotion-focused involves cognitive processes, and examples of such strategies are: avoidance, minimization, distancing, selective attention, positive comparisons and wrestling positive value from negative events. Problem-focused strategies also tend to cognitive processes but are more directed to handle the problem as "defining the problem, generating alternative solutions, weighing the alternatives in terms of their costs and benefits, choosing among them, and acting".

Coping can be thought about in terms of resources and it addresses the question "What can I do?". The actions a person makes to cope can thereby be interpreted by, and depend on, the resources available (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Some coping strategies are shown to be more efficient in how they are actually confronting the problem in the long term, as well as in the short term . Yet there is no clear consensus regarding a hierarchy of more and less effective coping strategies.

Music and Coping

Although coping should not be mistaken for only dealing with stress per se, they are still connected. It has been shown that specifically tempo of music can induce physiological responses, in both directions, as a relaxing effect or increasing bodily stress responses. One study by Bernardi et al (2009) was measuring heart rate, respiration, blood pressure, middle cerebral artery flow velocity, and skin vasomotion during different musical pieces and silence. Results showed that hearing a particular musical element such as 'crescendo' had an effect on skin vasoconstriction as well as increases in blood pressures and heart rate. Conversely, exposure to a silent pause and baseline resulted in only minor changes. There was no inherent difference between participants in terms of musical training.

Multiple studies have suggested that listening to music or performing music can be used as an effective coping strategy. One study, conducted with music therapy students,

examined the effects music had on reducing stress and anxiety, as well as if a particular musical element was perceived as more beneficial. Results indicated that the receptive music experience elicited a significant decrease in students' stress and anxiety levels (Fiore, 2018). According to a study by Ghetti (2013), the effects of music therapy used together with emotional approach coping led to improved positive affective states in adults awaiting elective cardiac catheterization, whereas a talk-based emphasis on emotional approach coping or standard care did not. All groups demonstrated a significant overall decrease in negative affect (Ghetti 2013). Biasutti & Concina (2014) compared professional musicians and music students and showed that one possible coping strategy for anxiety was social support and that the fact that professional musicians had more experience could explain their lower levels of anxiety. Another study by Silverman (2020) found that the use of behavioral disengagement and denial as coping strategies could be explained by unhealthy music use, but that healthy music use did not seem to explain the use of any identifiable coping strategy. According to a recent research review by Miranda (2019), there is preliminary evidence that listening to music and playing an instrument outside of performance may be used by adolescents in order to cope with stress. One of these preliminary results was that problem-solving coping through music-listening predicted lower neuroticism while avoidant musical coping predicted the opposite. Another preliminary finding is that playing music in a recreational setting may reduce stress (Miranda, 2019).

Musical Activity, Emotion and Cognition

Multiple studies have explored the relationship between musicians, music and affect. One study by Park et al. (2015) suggested that musicians have increased sensitivity of emotional processing with respect to sadness expressed in speech, possibly reflecting empathic processes. Koehler and Neubauer (2019) showed that, for hobby musicians, making music had a positive impact on positive affect and needs satisfaction, while negative affect and needs dissatisfaction were lower on days when participants reported making music. By interviewing adolescent choral singers, Parker (2011) found that they regarded music-making as a source of simultaneous affective experiences for those involved, and that the expression of music was viewed as an expression of feeling and emotion.

The cognitive effects of music have also been researched in many different studies. Kämpfe, Sedlmeier and Renkewitz (2010) performed a meta-analysis which focused on studies about the effects of background music on adult listeners. While finding that music

tends to increase positive emotional experiences, they did not find any general effect on cognition. They did look into more detail, however, they found that background music potentially has a small positive effect on performance on math tests, but they also found a small negative effect on memory and reading performance. Another meta-analysis by Talamini et al. (2017) has instead found that musicians perform better in memory tasks assessing long-term memory, short-term memory and working memory than non-musicians but that this partly depends on the type of stimuli to be remembered, with tonal stimuli unsurprisingly providing the biggest advantage for musicians.

In considering the cognitive effects of music, the issue of 'far transfer', which concerns whether musical education provides more general academic or intellectual benefits, has been of interest for both researchers and people involved with policy and education. Sala and Gobet (2017) conducted a meta-analysis examining studies about this notion of far transfer and found that, while there is a moderate positive relationship between music training and intelligence and memory, when looking only at the few rigorous studies that do exist, the effect is much smaller and could be explained through confounding factors such as the placebo effect. Ultimately it seems clear that more high quality quantitative studies, including robust experiments, are needed before the full potential of music to cause cognitive effects can be known. Qualitative studies, such as this one, can help guide such research in fruitful directions.

Purpose

In summary, while there is previous research related to how music is connected to the constructs of emotion regulation and coping, as well as other psychological effects of music-related activities and experiences, questions concerning how musicians relate music to ways to deal with distress and influence emotions as well as thoughts, have not been answered. Taking the aforementioned research and theories into consideration and taking a critical realist perspective, the aim of this study is to reach a greater insight on the potential music has as a tool for emotion-regulation and coping, as well as what effects music has on an emotional and cognitive level.

In doing a qualitative study by asking musicians about their personal experience, the intention behind this study is to get an understanding of the ways music is used as a tool, given the psychological constructs mentioned, and to what extent it has benefits or negative consequences. As emotion regulation and coping strategies can be both helpful and

maladaptive, the study of the relationship between music and emotion regulation and coping can be used to help people and to prevent them from experiencing negative outcomes. It is plausible that one can learn something from musicians, as they not only tend to know more about music, but are also often both actively and passively involved with music. This can be informative for gaining an understanding of how music can be used as an intervention more generally. This study can only begin to explore this subject, but will hopefully assist in the process of formulating new interesting research questions and hypotheses. With these aims as a background, two research questions have been formulated.

Research Questions

What meanings and roles does music have for musicians as a coping strategy or emotion-regulation strategy?

What emotional and cognitive effects does playing, creating and listening to music have for musicians?

Method

Data Collection and Procedure

We conducted semi-structured interviews, focused on the participants' personal experiences. Interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, i.e. Swedish. The questions asked were based on an interview guide (see Appendix A) created for this study, and included for example "How do you feel when you play music?" and "How do you think it would affect you if you weren't able to experience music?" as well as "Could you share more about which role music has for how you deal with tough situations?". The questions were designed to provide information related to the research questions. The interviews started by encouraging the participants to answer freely based on their own experiences. They were then asked a warm-up question about how they started making music. Subsequently, they answered questions related to the research questions. Towards the end of the interview, participants were asked whether they would like to add anything that they felt was important to them, which had not already been answered. The order of the questions was flexible, with follow-up questions being frequently asked. For the interviews, the program Zoom Video Communication, Inc, version Version: 4.6.7 (18176.0301) was used. Sound recordings were made though the Zoom program settings. The interviews took slightly less than one hour per person on average. The analysis of the data, generated from the interview, was solely based on the recorded material from the interviews.

Participants

Participants were initially recruited by contacting the higher music schools in Sweden. Since participants recruited from contacting music schools were fewer than the amount planned for, additional participants were recruited through convenience sampling, contacting people already known by one of the researchers which fulfilled the inclusion criteria of performing an instrument or singing solo or in a band on a regular basis. The reason for this choice of criteria was that the participants would be exposed to music in similar ways as the music students, making them a relatively homogeneous group. They should also be similar in proficiency and in their level of experience. An information-bulletin about the study was disseminated among music students through their school administrators and the ones interested contacted back via email, thus showing an interest in participating in the study. In total of the ten participants in this study, seven of which came from contacting music schools, whereas three were contacted directly. The age-span amongst participants was 20-25 years.

Ethical Consideration

Because of the current Covid-19 pandemic, the choice was made to conduct the interviews via online video-call, using Zoom. The program Zoom did not save any sensitive data such as: identifying information (such as physical address), or recordings of the meetings unless one chooses to (for full description of their privacy policy: https://zoom.us/privacy/). Prior to the interviews, in consideration of consent, the participants were given and signed an informed consent-form, which contained information regarding the main aims of the study and that specified their participation was anonymous and voluntary, which they could disrupt from any time. Because of the limitation of meeting in person, the informed-consent form was signed using a Swedish electronic service called 'elektronisk signering' using mobile bankID in which no sensitive information such as personal details was collected. The participants were informed that the interview-recording would be deleted six month after they were recorded. To ensure confidentiality, assurances were given that no real names of the participants would be mentioned.

Epistemological and Ontological Approach

Because the study is concerned with *emotion regulation* and coping and thus based on theories which presuppose real psychological processes, the study was performed within a realist paradigm. However, music affects us in subtle and complex ways, so the approach here is a critical realist one, since it is unlikely that people will be able to completely or

accurately describe the processes involved. This epistemological position is post-positivist, accepting some of the criticism of positivism but not abandoning all parts of it. Both positivism and post-positivism make a sharp distinction between the researcher and the participant but post-positivism acknowledges that the researcher may affect the results even when properly following procedure. They also differ when it comes to how clearly they think the researcher can comprehend reality, with post-positivism being more critical (Ponteretto, 2005). Taking a post-positivist and critical realist perspective means assuming that there are real facts to be discovered but that those facts are not always immediately apparent and are instead often subject to interpretation (Ponteretto, 2005). Taking this perspective also means acknowledging the role of the researcher in guiding and affecting both the research process and, to a certain extent, the results (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This approach was taken with the aim of gaining more information about musicians as a population and as individuals.

Data Analysis

After having done the interviews, the recorded audio was transcribed verbatim. The data analysis was done as a thematic analysis, using a procedure proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006) for thematic analysis-model, which includes six steps or phases: (1) transcribing, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, (6) producing the report. After being transcribed, the data went through two cycles of coding. A code often is a word or a short phrase, and the process of coding involves labeling and summarizing significant features found in portions of qualitative data (Saldaña, 2009). Codes can be seen as the basic unit of analysis in this kind of qualitative research (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In the first cycle the whole transcript was coded using a variety of coding methods, having a semantic approach, in which only the actual words being used are analysed (as compared to a latent approach which involves interpreting underlying meaning into the words). The most notably, 'in vivo' coding, when words used by the participants make up the code. Other codes emerged by labeling and summarizing short excerpts of the transcripts, as well as by conducting simultaneous coding, descriptive coding, process coding, initial coding, emotion coding and values coding (Saldaña, 2009). The coding was done manually. In the second cycle of coding, the data and the primary codes were examined again, in order to find patterns in the data throughout and across the interviews.

Candidate themes were created based on both data excerpts and the initial codes by collecting closely related codes and creating and naming categories for these collections.

These categories were then further developed by reexamining the transcripts and highlighted data excerpts for underlying themes and patterns. By ensuring that the candidate themes were based on multiple data excerpts or recurring coding patterns, a greater evidential robustness of the themes was ensured. The themes were identified in a deductive way, with the research questions as the primary interest. In total 13 candidate themes were identified. These candidate themes were then reviewed and reduced to seven, based on the criteria of external heterogeneity, which states that themes should be identifiable and distinct (Braun & Clarke, 2006). These seven themes were then organized under two main themes, each being related to a separate research question. Further refining and defining of the themes resulted in a clearer picture of how they related to each other and the research question. Consequently, the theme *need for music* was integrated into the other themes, especially into *music as a calling*. Another decision was to not include the original two main themes since there was no natural way of organizing the data and the 'sub-themes' into parts belonging purely to each research question. The end result was six themes, which, whilst separate, tells one coherent story related to both research questions.

Results

The thematic analysis resulted in six different themes: (1) Music as channel for emotions, (2) Music and stress/anxiety, (3) Music as a separate world, (4) Music as a calling, (5) Music as communication, (6) The power of music.

All the participants seemed to have started their musical interest early on in their childhood, being encouraged by either their family or their school-environment. The quotes provided in this section can be found in original Swedish in Appendix B.

Theme: Music as a Channel for Emotions

In their descriptions of the role music had for them emotionally, the participants seemed to describe music as a way to express, process or change their emotions. When playing music they could channel what they were feeling and thinking into the music and when listening to music it was often a way of having an outlet for the emotions, whether positive or negative.

The way one of the interviewed put it, to not be able to experience or be involved with music "would limit my ability to feel things" (music student, age 25). One participant expressed that "don't know, if you could say that one have some sort of, kind of, emotional, fine-sensitivity of some sort, by being involved a lot with music, I think." (music student, age

24). In line with this theme, music had the function of "letting emotions out of the system" as another participant described it. By either singing or playing an instrument, this served as an external medium through which an internal felt emotion is channeled.

In regards to emotion regulation, music showed the potential of changing participants' inner state. We asked if they felt differently after having played or sang a song, one interviewee explained that at the end of singing at a concert:

I had sang out and it was as if everything had splashed against the wall, and that all my feelings were up on the walls like paint. Because I had expressed myself and didn't have anything else to hide, in that sense. (music student, age 25)

Music had many functions in regards to a wide spectrum of emotional states. Music was shown to serve different purposes and aims depending on the wanted effect.

On the positive scale of emotions, they mentioned that music makes them want to dance, jump around, make them excited and pumped up and had the effect of motivating them. As one participant explained:

Listening to happy, uplifting, eh, swinging music is something that can… has very so, eh... can give a very strong eh, well, mood-effect. Yeah, give a lot of joy and energy, get one to wake up and get one to kinda want to move, dance or jump. Kind of anything. (musician, age 23)

Other positive uses of music is turning to it to calm down, relax and to feel at ease.

On the negative spectrum of emotions, participants turn to music when they are sad, to feel understood by others, to feel less alone or to decrease their anxiety. One participant said that they, when sad, listened to sad music, but not when being too sad:

It is nice sometimes, when something is too heavy. But not…, some things you don't dig yourself into. And with some things you do, so.. to be in a little. Ehm, milder forms of sorrow, for example. Where there is a relatable effect, or how to say (music student, age 23).

Another person said they listened to music to stay in that emotion and make it stronger. One interviewee explained that, when knowing the history behind the music and the person who created it, the music has a bigger impact on understanding a deeper meaning of the music, but only in some cases. This was also related to music taste.

In several cases, participants explained that music had importance for them when dealing with death and the sorrow of losing someone standing close. When asking about

strong memories connected to music, interviewees explicitly mentioned funerals, in which music had an important role both at the ceremony itself and in the time closely before and after. They listened to music as a way to reduce anxiety or process what happened. They also played music more intensely as a way to distract from the event itself as well as created music after the loss.

Most participants mentioned that they mainly listened to music that resembles the feeling they already had, both negative and positive, to amplify the emotion itself. Results showed they did not use music to change their negative state into a positive, rather they used music to feel a connection and understanding of their inner state. They also searched for specific music to listen to, which they knew from experience had stimulated a certain feeling before. Conversely, participants express they in some cases felt the need to actively choose not to listen to music for reasons that will be brought up in the coming section and theme.

Theme: Music and Stress/Anxiety

This theme relates to how the participants elaborate what part music has when coping with stress and hardship. A few of the musicians interviewed said that they avoid listening to music when they are stressed. Mainly, it showed that - in an already stressed situation - music can be distracting and take up too much attention from a task they need to do. One of the participants mentioned that he would not want to listen to music while being stressed because he often has a theoretical analysis when listening to music, he "involuntarily start to listen to the music through my instrument. And at the same time try to play along in my head." (music student, age 24). Perhaps this is unique for the group 'musicians' in particular since they have an interest in understanding music's components and techniques. Therefore, silence should be looked upon as a contrast to music and sound in general. To turn off music, is important to mention in this context - or as one participant said: "listen to white noise as a way of cleansing." (music student, age 25). Moreover, some of the participants indicated that music can sometimes be a source of stress, being part of their profession and work-related tasks. Here it seems to either be because working on one piece of music while listening to another can be distracting, or because of stress and anxiety related to internal or external requirements to perform well.

There seems to be several reasons for this. One is potentially that, just as some types of music can be relaxing and stress-reducing, other forms of music can be stress-inducing. Thus, music can have effect in both directions. According to one of the people interviewed,

music can be stressful: "if it is a high tempo or, eh, music being played quickly" (music student, age 24). That music is work, as well as passion, seems to result in music having an ambivalent role for musicians especially. What is usually experienced positively can in certain situations be something that one would rather avoid. In such situations, some participants divulged that they find other methods, including alternatives to music such as (in one case) listening to white noise, in order to cope and reduce stress. This was not true of all the participants, however, as one participant who described her state of mind while playing music said that she made an effort to not think about anything while playing and said that "music is a form of relief" (music student, age 20) from thinking too much. There is also anxiety related to playing music, at least when doing it with other people. One music student, age 23, said:

> When you play with others you have to be focused in a completely different way, it becomes a kind of social focus to create something together that is very beautiful. When one is only playing for oneself then one can simply drop it in a way, nothing happens if one doesn't complete or isn't super focused. In that way it is better to play with others but when playing with others one might get nervous and depressed thinking one isn't good. If one is playing alone one can do whatever one wants without anyone having to care.

Theme: Music as a Separate World

This theme was developed on the basis that music was sometimes described as its own reality both in the sense as a place to escape to but also in the more philosophical sense as something which transcends everyday reality, having its own rules and justification. By some, music is being used as a way of shutting away the outer world by putting on headphones and entering into your own chosen space of music. Music can be used as a way of escapism being expressed by one participant as "fleeing from reality" and "to get away from the feeling of everyday-life" (music student, age 25). Another interviewee said: "I'm very sensitive to too many impressions, and therefore it can be nice to put on music when sitting on the bus, to not get overwhelmed by everything going on around me" (music student, age 24). Music is looked upon as a room or space where one doesn't have to worry too much about norms as one music student, age 24, explained:

> I think the most important thing with music for me, among other things, is perhaps that there is not much in the broad scheme of things that is right or wrong. Instead, in

music one has all the right to feel exactly what you want, about it. Even if there are a bunch of theories and practicalities on how things should be done, in the best way, there is this… it is encouraged to break some rules. Because nothing is really, there is nothing that isn't okay to do or to feel.

A third participant expressed: "it's a place where you can feel and express the extreme emotions, for example in opera when you sing out loud from the top of your lungs - expressing being sad or angry for six minutes straight - it is very liberating." (Music student, age 23).

A fourth participant expressed how music transcends practical concerns:

Music is just beautiful. It is like flowers. They aren't there for one to make use of them, perhaps. One can make use of music but words are little more clear while music, it is something which makes people into something a little more divine sort of. It is something greater, it is something which can unite everyone. (musician, age 23)

Music is thus interpreted as a separate world, both in a metaphorical sense as something to enter into, like its own room, as well as - on a more philosophical note - something that you can connect to in a broader sense when it feels like reality is not enough or is being expressed as limiting. Music is here described as something 'bigger'.

Theme: Music as a Calling

This theme relates to how the participants reflect on music in a broad sense becoming integrated in their whole life, which has made it difficult for them to distinguish what parts of themselves are separate from their musical life. Many of the participants express that they would try to do almost anything to be able to work with music in some way and that it is hard to picture how it would be living without being able to experience music. This is something we interpret as music as part of a musician's identity - because it is related to their background and integrated in many other aspects of their lives, as well in terms of who they surround themselves with (i.e. relations). Both external rewards, such as praise and acknowledgement, and internal rewards, for example simply finding enjoyment or meaning in the act of making music, seem to have made music and being a musician into a calling for the participants. As one of those interviewed explained when asked how she got started with music:

It is very much that it has just existed as a thing for a very long time. Maybe certainly in that way, like in a way that it was available so to speak. That there was a choir in

grade school which one could be a part of after school, eh, and then that… started music class in fourth grade or something like that or yes, fourth grade. And was… was like that just a certain… it wasn't like I didn't feel anything, I maybe just thought it seemed fun and people talked about it and my parents, eh, encouraged me to do it. (musician, age 23)

Several of those interviewed have a hard time picturing themselves doing anything else and some are afraid to think about what would happen if they could not play or listen to music, mentioning the fear of losing one hand and not being able to play their instruments. For many of the participants music was more than just a job or a hobby, it was more akin to a fundamental need. One participant compared music-making to breathing, another to eating and drinking, a third mentioned having headphones (with music) on constantly and talked about being addicted. Some of the participants also spoke about creativity and expressed a desire to create and to express themselves through creation. It seems that through practicing and learning about music, those interviewed have developed a special relationship to music. When listening to music they, in many cases, seem to take special note of the technical aspects of a performance and sometimes get an intellectual enjoyment out of analysing the music that is being played. The technical aspects of music, theoretical as well as practical, often become part of the participants' thoughts when listening to, playing or creating music. This deeper knowledge of music can include aspects of how music affects people psychologically, which includes immediate changes to emotions. For example, one participant said that "I have done that very much on the way to the job, for example one tries to listen to music which doesn't start even more like negative emotions but something which is a little more positive." (musician, age 24).

Beyond such immediate effects, one might also consider deeper, more long-term emotional and cognitive effects. Indeed those interviewed speculated about the ways that they have been affected. Some of what was mentioned includes increased empathy, improved ability to improvise, changes in identity and political attitude as well as a greater understanding of other cultures.

Being part of a music-community seems to be important in the sense of coping as social support, finding understanding from other fellow musicians when it comes to music-making or music-performing.

Theme: Communication through Music

This theme includes the way the participants express that music is used as a way of communicating, either in a clear and direct way (related to lyrics in music) or as more subtle, intuitive unconscious communicating messages through music (related to instrumental music).

It seems clear that all the musicians who were interviewed viewed music as a way of communicating or expressing themselves. When asked what messages could be found in music, most of them concluded that music could mean "anything" or "everything". Some of them expressed that music is its own language. They all agreed that music was a way to communicate emotions without using words but several of them also came up with examples of other messages that could be transmitted through music, including political and religious messages.

Music also seemed to be a way of communicating on a deeper level, being a way to connect to people and being a way to express the deepest parts of oneself without words. Moreover, the role of the audience emerged as a subject in several of the interviews. To expose oneself in front of an audience, connecting to that audience and telling a story through the music seemed to be a meaningful experience. By playing improvisation-music such as jazz - they use music as a way to express themselves, and "saying what you want in the moment" (music student, age 24), through the voice of their instrument.

There also seemed to be important differences between communicating through music and communicating through words. One big difference according to those interviewed is that music is more abstract and more open to interpretation than other ways of communicating. Another difference is that music can communicate more directly in terms of expressing emotions without anyone having to know anything else about another person.

Finally, not only did the participants talk about the ability of music to be used for communication, but some of those interviewed also put that notion into practice by playing music on their instruments in order to explain musical concepts and how differences in how the music is played can result in very different experiences.

Theme: The Power of Music

This theme reflects the way that music is described to influence and change people. Music is portrayed as powerful both in a concrete sense of affecting people physically, literally making them move in the case of dancing for instance, or mentally. However, it is also powerful in a more abstract sense, as among the participants, the majority expressed they

believe music is something bigger than themselves, as well as something that is universal and concerns everyone in some sense. Both thinking of music as a force for personal and social change but also as something which has value in itself.

Many of the musicians refer to 'the unconscious' in the sense that music affects us in ways we might not be fully aware of. One participant mentioned how music makes her feel like she can do anything and that, even though it does not necessarily feel like it in the moment, she is sure that music has influenced the decisions she has made. Music also causes changes in a more direct and conscious way. Playing or listening to music becomes a way of looking for and experiencing particular emotions. Generally, those interviewed knew what music they liked and what feelings it induced and such music became something constant through which one could recreate an emotion, memory or experience over and over again. It is also the case that music involves a process of discovery, experiencing different emotions and resulting in new thoughts.

Another way in which music is experienced is mostly specific, through playing or singing, and relates to how one can feel the power of music as a physical sensation in the body since one has to use the body to perform music, but also since one can "get a kick" out of the experience. According to some descriptions, when the experience of music is the most powerful:

It is like one… well one becomes one with the music, like one becomes filled up or one… one feel that like yes and then one forgets oneself, so I think it is a kind of ascension into something else, a little like being in love and like that… it is very hard to express.(musician, aged 23).

Music thus seems to have the power to evoke a certain feeling that one is striving to reach, in which it fills one's whole being.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to reach a greater insight into the potential music has as a tool for emotion-regulation and coping, by focusing on musicians. In the pursuit of this aim, semi-structured interviews were conducted with music students and musicians performing music recreationally. The study had two research questions. First, what meanings and roles does music have for musicians as a coping strategy or *emotion regulation* strategy? Second, what emotional and cognitive effects does playing, creating and listening to music have for musicians? The two research questions are overlapping in subject-matter, in which the

aspects of emotional and cognitive effects are intertwined with the processes of *emotion regulation* and *coping*. Data analysis yielded in six themes: *music as channel for emotions*, *music and stress/anxiety*, *music as a separate world*, *music as a calling*, *music as communication*, *the power of music*. The first theme reflects how music was described as a channel through which one could process, express and change emotions. The second theme concerns how music, stress and anxiety was talked about as being related, in terms of how they may influence each other or how they may be associated. The third theme relates to the fact that music was depicted as a way to escape from, or transcend everyday reality. The fourth theme tends to music as a strong need which has been integrated into their whole life, to the extent that imagining a life without music is almost unthinkable. The fifth theme concerns the perception of music as a transferring medium of messages that can be both direct as well as abstract and subtle. The sixth theme describes the way music is reflected upon as something bigger than ourselves and being universal in a powerful sense, and music as experienced as a strong physical and bodily sensation.

The themes that emerged provided some interesting answers to the first research question. It seems clear that musicians use music for emotion regulations in several ways. As portrayed in themes *music as a separate world* and *music as a calling*, several interviewees mentioned using headphones to listen to music or putting on music in the background. This, as indicated in *music as a channel for emotion*, could energize them in the morning, put them in a better mood while commuting or intensify the emotions caused by the weather. One could classify such behaviour under 'situation modification' since listening to music in this way is evidently a way of altering the situation in order to influence the emotions felt at that moment (Gross, 2015). More specifically, some of this usage falls into what Gross (2015) calls 'attentional deployment', meaning that they used music to distract themselves from tough situations or negative emotions. Such behaviour is also in line with *emotion regulation* theory (Zillmann, 1988), since it is obviously aimed at reducing the magnitude or experience of negative emotions. Interestingly, music was also used in the opposite way, to reflect on negative experiences and to express negative emotions, for example by crying. This parallels the findings by Garrido and Schubert (2011b) that music can be used for grieving and reflection. This would be what Gross (2015) labels 'response modulation' and 'cognitive change' as it for example pertains to inducing crying and to help with reflecting respectively. Of course it is an open question whether this use of music is healthy or not, and Garrido and

Schubert (2011b) suggest that there is a chance that it could either result in a healthy grieving process or an unhealthy rumination over the past.

In terms of coping, the picture is more mixed. Involved in the theme *music and stress/anxiety* is the role of music as both a cause of stress and as a reducer of stress. There are several potential explanations for this, as previously mentioned, Bernardi et al (2009) found that depending on the nature of the musical elements of a piece, different physiological responses will be induced. Extrapolating that, one could conclude that, depending on the music one listens to, one will either tend to become more stressed or less stressed. While this probably partially explains the ambivalent reactions to music in the context of stress, it seems unlikely to be the entire explanation, since some of the participants reported they avoided all forms of music when stressed despite the fact that one would expect them, as musicians, to be aware of a wide range of music. Another explanation is that music being part of the profession of the participants results in a different relationship between music and a musician as compared to a non-musician, as it pertains to stress. It could be that music performance anxiety (MPA; Burin et al., 2019) is what's behind the avoidance of music in some cases. According to Burin et al. (2019) the most common causes of MPA were "pressure from self, attempting a difficult repertoire, uncertainty attributable to technical flaws, concern about audience reaction/evaluation, and presence of trait anxiety". One of those interviewed mentioned how the pressures of getting into higher musical education could cause some people to lose interest in music-making. One could speculate that the culture around music education and professional musical performance (in the sense of competitiveness and high expectations) results in higher than usual stress and anxiety. The fact a couple of participants mentioned going to therapy could indicate that this is indeed so.

Although musicians sometimes seem to associate music with stress, it is also clear that music is frequently used for coping, both by listening and by playing music. The themes *music as a calling* and *communication through music* both exhibit this. As their musical profession becomes part of their social identity, they become more likely to form social bonds with other musicians, which can result in social support being easily available. By performing music, musicians have the opportunity to use emotion-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1980), by expressing themselves, giving their distress a musical interpretation and not bottling-up their feelings, i.e. using *music as a channel for emotions*.

One concept that resonates with this is the process of flow, developed by Csikszentmihalyi (1990). Flow refers to a state in which people are so caught up or involved in an activity, that it becomes their whole focus for a moment. The experience itself is fulfilling, which makes one want to keep doing it for its own sake (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Much of the research on flow has been conducted on musicians, as well as other people that are specialised in certain areas (sports, like climbing or chess-playing; Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). One study, comparing dancers and musicians, found no significant difference of Flow between the groups (Soudi & Kamble, 2018). What is common for these groups, no matter what activity they are involved in, is that they share the similar state of what is being described as flow. Many of the participants in this study reported that they have trouble imagining themselves doing anything else apart from music. Results suggests that playing music, and the experience it emphasised as "the peak of emotions" (music student, age 23), and that "like one becomes filled up or one… one feel that like yes and then one forgets oneself, so I think it is a kind of ascension into something else" (musicians, aged 23) or a "relief from thinking" (music student, aged 20). This resonates with the concept of flow. It was expressed by the musicians as a big fear, and regarded as a great loss, if they would not be able to experience music ever again. This can also explain why playing music is something you "get a kick" out of, to achieve this state. This can partly be explained by the cognitive aspects, in which playing and creating music is described as intellectually stimulating, in terms of balance between challenge and skills, which is a characteristic of flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990).

Having *music as a separate world* could plausibly allow one time to reflect on and either accept, deny or distract oneself and perhaps even forget that which is causing one's distress. Music could also be part of a more problem-focused coping (Lazarus & Folkman 1980). One example of this is how one participant and her mother were able to put aside their disagreements that they had during an argument with each other, after a successful performance together.

Related to the second research question, the study also yielded some interesting information which concerned the effects that listening, playing and creating music have on emotion and cognition. It is important to note that listening to music can have different effects from playing music, and that creating music can differ in effects from either listening or playing. From the data, one can notice these differences, as unexpectedly playing or

singing tends to have stronger effects than listening to music, but these activities also correspond to different motivations. While listening to music is sufficient for music to be a channel for emotions, in order to fulfill the desires that make music a calling, it is necessary to make music and not only consume it. More specifically, it seems clear that music has many different effects for those involved with it. One of these is how music makes one more connected to and more sensitive to emotions as seen in the theme of *music as a channel for emotions*. It could be that the ability to use music to explore, amplify, change and even dwell in emotions provides an opportunity to become better attuned to the emotions one experiences. Returning to how emotions are defined in psychology, music can be used as an opportunity to learn about emotions on a more first-person experiential level, since emotions are response tendencies (Gross, 1998), or appraisals of an outside event (Chen, 2010), which are time limited and situationally bound (McRae & Gross, 2020). This means that in normal situations it is unlikely that one will be able to reach a higher level of subjective familiarity with emotions since one will tend to (a) be distracted by an outside event or situation, (b) be focused on how to respond to one's situation and (c) only experience the emotion for a limited amount of time. Music can be a way to get around such constraints since, rather than creating a practical circumstance which requires a practical response, "Music is just beautiful", and for that reason music invites one to simply experience and perhaps reflect on that experience.

A further effect of music, no matter how one engages with it, can be seen in the themes about *music and stress/anxiety* as well as *music as a separate world* where music is described as a distraction which seems to take up attention and cognitive resources. What does seem unique to musicians as a group is how music takes up cognitive resources. Since musicians have an increased theoretical, practical and intuitive understanding of music, it seems that they are able to automatically analyze the music that they engage with in ways which non-musicians generally would not. One could speculate that this increases the degree of cognitive resources taken up when musicians engage with music, although it might also be the case that musicians use the same amount of cognitive effort on music, just in different and perhaps more efficient ways.

There is also the suggestion in *music as a separate world* that music can change us on a deeper level, making us "more divine" although exactly what that implies, can only be the subject of speculation for now. What does seem to be more palpable is that music, according to several of those interviewed, can bring us together. This is in line with the findings by

Parker (2011) that music-making results in simultaneous affective experiences, and it seems likely that simultaneously experiencing the same emotion is part of what gives music this quality of creating fellowship. However, it also seems plausible that other factors are involved in producing this effect. As mentioned in *music as a calling,* it seems that music can cause changes in identity and attitudes. Indeed, taking the theme *music as communication* into account, it seems that music can be a persuasive instrument that one can use to construct and express narratives similar to verbal exchange. A third potential cause behind the socializing influence of music is that especially intense musical experiences, which are experienced as profound or meaningful, can change our values, priorities and our view of social relationships (Schäfer, Smukalla & Oelker, 2014). It is also conceivable that just the fact that one is doing and experiencing something together brings about something akin to camaraderie.

No evidence was found for any 'far transfer' effects. While there were suggestions from the participants that music had improved their intuition and improvisation skills, when asked how they think music influences them, they generally didn't talk about topics related to intelligence, mathematics or academic performance in general. If there are such far transfer effects, then it would seem that they aren't something that young musicians are too aware of. Neither could any effects on memory be ascertained, although the fact that some of the participants decided to communicate certain concepts through playing music or through sound effects is in line with the results from Talamini et al. (2017) that tonal sensations are remembered most easily by musicians.

Music did seem to have other cognitive effects though, as according to at least one of those interviewed, it increases empathy and understanding of other people; some mentioned how music was a part of their identity and even personality. Lastly, as mentioned before and as made clear through the theme *the power of music*, music can clearly have an immediate influence on our emotions, whether we are conscious of this or not, and recent research indicates that this happens independently of visual associations (Day & Thompson 2019).

Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, the participants that signed up for the study showed an interest in the subject and aims of the study. Perhaps those who from the beginning thought of music as a way of coping and regulating emotion were more drawn to the description included in the recruitment text. Therefore, we might not have captured a

representative sample of musicians as a group, and cannot generalize the results to all musicians as a population. Secondly, the results may not be generalizable to non-musicians, given the special relationship musicians have with music. Factors such as an increased understanding of music as well as music performance anxiety, among other things, can affect how musicians experience, and use music differently from non-musicians.

Doing the interviews at a distance (online) is different from doing them face to face, which results in significant challenges, the most obvious of these being technical difficulties and the reliance on an internet connection. Unfortunately, in some interviews, portions of the audio were not successfully transmitted. This challenge could be addressed by asking the participant to repeat what they just said, but this risks breaking up the flow of the interview. Another challenge is the lack of ability to control the environment, either for the purpose of minimizing distractions or in order to manipulate the situation. Finally, some level of technical proficiency as well as equipment is required of both the interviewer and the interviewee in order to be able perform the interview.

A limitation worth mentioning is that the results are very much based on the interview guide-question, although being semi-structured in form, it was freely elaborated with what came up in the interviews. This put some pressure on the researcher to be precise in the ways the questions were formulated, when needed to specify what the question meant, to clarify in cases when it was hard for the participants to understand how to reply. This might affect the results in terms of how well it answers the research questions. Another limitation connected to this, is how well each participant is able to articulate themselves in terms of way of thinking and feeling, that is then interpreted by the researchers. This puts pressure on the participant to be self-reflective, and as an attempt to understand the degree of self-reflexivity, one question in the interview guide was "How well do you consider yourself to reflect about your own emotions and feelings?". Going back to the epistemological approach for this study, critical realism, this emphasises the meaning of the researcher as having an active role. This means that the results will inevitably be affected by the interpretation made by the researcher. The answers from the participants are reflected by the questions being asked by the researcher. In terms of research-reflexivity, we are aware that some questions might be leading, which will affect the answers (i.e. the results), for example: "Some musicians say that music could be a way of expressing without words, would you agree?". This sort of

leading question might not encourage participants' elaboration of their experiences, rather make them confirm or dismiss a certain statement which was given to them.

Benefits

Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the study has several benefits. The fact that the current study was a qualitative one provided a more in-depth view to the research questions in terms of the lived experiences of music for musicians. Some interesting new findings emerged, such as that there seems to be a strong need for music and that music is being used for many purposes (for example when dealing with negative emotions). This implies that there is value in conducting further research within this field, to gain understanding of the mechanisms behind this, and how usage of music could be beneficial.

Something significant and unique for the current study is that doing interviews with musicians online allowed the participants to use musical instruments at home. Although this was unplanned for, it demonstrated that being able to play musical concepts combined with explaining them with words could show more precisely in which ways music can be communicated. In comparison, conducting a face-to-face interview would less likely facilitate the usage of props or equipment.

Further Research

Because this study was based on music students mainly within a similar age group, further research could include working musicians as well as hobby musicians and non-musicians, in order to investigate whether the use of music differentiates between these groups. Certainly a lot of research could be done on the ways the effects of music interact with emotions and context, since this seems to be central to how those interviewed in this study seem to use, shape and experience music. The relationship between stress and music seems to be an important subject for further research. More specifically, the circumstances under which music can cause or intensify stress and whether this differs between musicians and non-musicians, are questions which should be addressed in the future.

A further question of importance is whether listening to or playing music influences the outcomes of the use of coping strategies or perhaps alters which coping strategies are employed. It is also of interest to consider how music changes our relationship to everyday reality and to ourselves. Perhaps one could study this by looking into association between music and prosocial, religious or self-esteem related attitudes. The notion that playing or

listening to music has an effect on empathy, ability to improvise or one's understanding of culture, also seems worth pursuing in future studies.

One interesting finding was that, for many musicians, music is more akin to a fundamental need than to a tool to solve problems, regulate emotions or cope with stress, although they would acknowledge that music could be used in that way as well. This makes it interesting to study not merely the effects of music but also the effects of a lack of music. How would it actually affect people to be unable to experience music? Moreover, the ways in which music can be used for communication is an important question for further research. Are there emotions or concepts which music cannot communicate? How does music communicate concepts and emotions and how is this similar or different from how verbal and other forms of communications works? Finally, there is also the issue of how mind and body react to music. What about music can energize and make us dance or tranquilize and make us cry? These are all some potentially good questions for interested researchers to study.

This study was based on a realist approach and potential future research based on this study could be expected to take the same approach. This makes sense when studying the relationship between music and stress or how the body reacts to music, for example. Beyond that, one could imagine that a phenomenological study of emotions could become easier by using music to induce, experience and reflect on an emotion. The notion that music is a kind of language could open up new avenues for research related to discourse or based on a social constructionist paradigm.

Conclusions

To summarize, listening, playing and creating music seem to have several cognitive and emotional effects, as well as important meanings and significant roles relating to coping and emotion regulation strategies. Results showed that music has the function of being soothing and helping in times of sorrow and sadness, as well as to release emotions, as a channel using music as an outlet. Interestingly, music was avoided in times of stress. Several of the themes provided insight into the fact that musicians use music for emotion regulation in several ways. The themes also revealed the complex relationship between music and coping, especially for musicians where it seems that music can be helpful in some ways but cause more stress under some circumstances. The cognitive and emotional effects of playing, creating and listening to music were also elucidated. While no far transfer effects were found,

music instead seems to have the ability to cause a flow state and be useful for introspection related to emotions.

The findings from this study also have important theoretical and practical implications. In practical terms, it seems that music really brings people together and one could therefore expect that music, especially performing it in some way, could be a way to foster better social relationships. Music is clearly a flexible *emotion regulation* tool and has potential to be employed as part of successful *coping strategies*. There are still unanswered questions however, and future studies, no matter which methodology they use, will need to consider how and why music can be viewed as capable of changing us on a fundamental level.

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Appendix A

Interview-guide

Saker vi vill veta:

1. *Använder musiker musik som copingstrategi eller emotion-reglerare? Hur? Är det skillnad på att spela och att lyssna?*
2. *I vilka sammanhang är musik (mer) menings- och betydelsefullt? Vilken roll spelar vad det är för låt eller genre?*
3. *Hur kan en musiker använda musik för att uttrycka sig? Uttrycker de känslor?*
4. *Hur hanterar musiker stress och emotioner?*
5. *Vilka tankar och kognitiva mönster/processer är för musiker associerade med musik?*
6. *Påverkar musik hur och vilka emotioner musiker känner?*
7. *Ålder!*

Inledning för intervjun:

Hej och tack för att du vill vara med på intervjun. Det kommer ta ca en timme. Som det stod i blanketten om informerat samtycke så handlar denna studie om att få en djupare förståelse och bättre inblick i en musikers upplevelse av musik. Hur musik kan få en att känna eller tänka.

Det finns inga rätt eller fel svar på frågor, du får svara precis som du vill utifrån dina egna erfarenheter.

Har du några frågor innan vi börjar?

Uppvärmningsfråga

Minns du vad som fick dig att börja med musik?

Intervjufrågor

1. Har du något starkt **minne** av en musikupplevelse, skulle du vilja berätta om det?
2. Finns det musik som känns särskilt **meningsfull** för dig? På vilket sätt?
3. Finns det tillfällen då du känner att du **behöver** musik? Med 'behöver' menas alltså när du känner ett starkt behov att komma i kontakt med musik, antingen att få spela eller lyssna på musik. Kan du komma på något exempel när detta har hänt, att du har känt behov av musik?
4. Hur tror du det skulle påverka dig om du **inte kunde uppleva** musik?
5. Om du av någon anledning **inte skulle kunna fortsätta spela musik**, hur tror du att det skulle påverka dig?
6. Vad tror du att musik kan **uttrycka eller kommunicera**? Vad för slags meddelanden finns det i musik? Spelar det någon roll?
7. Det finns musiker som har hävdat att musik kan användas som ett sätt att **uttrycka sina känslor utan att behöva använda ord**, hur tänker du kring det?
8. Tror du att ditt musicerande har inflytande på andra delar av ditt liv, alltså att det påverkar hur du tänker kring saker som inte är relaterade till musik?
9. *Hur tror du att musik påverkar dig överlag? (Hur tror du att musik påverkar dina känslor och tankar?)*
10. Kan du berätta mer om vilken roll musik har för hur du hanterar jobbiga situationer? (följdfråga: Kan du komma på något konkret exempel på när musik har hjälpt dig?) om ja: på vilket sätt **hjälpte** musik, vad var det med musiken som kunde underlätta? Är musik det första du använder dig av, **vilka andra metoder har du?**

11. Hur reflekterar du kring **dina egna känslor**? Hur brukar du oftast göra när du upplever starka känslor, framförallt negativa?

12. Vad brukar du **tänka** på när du lyssnar på musik?

13. **Skapar** du musik själv, **vad händer i dina tankar** när du skapar?

14. Vad brukar du **tänka** när du spelar musik? (Kan du göra en jämförelse med andra upplevelser?)

15. Finns det **sätt som du använder** för att påverka ditt humör och dina känslor? Vilka då? Kan du ge exempel?

16. Man brukar ju prata om ledsna låtar, och glada låtar t.ex. Hur förändras din sinnesstämning av att lyssna på musik (beroende på vilken känsla musik uttrycker)?

17. Hur **påverkas** du av musik? Hur påverkas t.ex. din **energi-nivå, eller humör**? (uppmuntra till detaljerade beskrivningar) kan du förklara mer vad det innebär?

18. Om du skulle försöka beskriva för någon som inte kan uppleva musik, t.ex någon som är tondöv, hur du försöka beskriva **hur det känns för dig** när du **lyssnar** på musik?

19. Hur **känns** det när du **spelar** musik?

20. Skulle du kunna beskriva vad det är som händer inom dig när du **spelar** musik?

21. Har du någon erfarenhet av **att känna annorlunda** efter att du har **spelat** på en låt? Kan du ge något konkret exempel? Hur upplevde du det?

Avrundningsfrågor:

Finns det något som är viktigt när det gäller musik som vi inte pratat om tillräckligt?

Finns det något i allmänhet som du skulle vilja lägga till som vi inte redan har pratat om?

Har du några andra frågor innan vi avslutar?

Isåfall får jag tacka dig för att du ville ställa upp. Om du vill läsa uppsatsen kan vi skicka den mailen som du kontaktade oss med.

Appendix B

Quotes

Quotes, the English ones (being translated from Swedish) and the *Swedish* quotes from the original transcript. Provided in order of appearance.

"would limit my ability to feel things".

Jag tror verkligen att det skulle kunna göra mig väldigt deprimerad för det är en så viktig del av mig att uttrycka mig på det sättet och att ta in intryck på det sättet. Jag tror att det skulle så här begränsa min förmåga att känna saker, så känns det nu när jag kan det för att lyssna på musik eller spela musik kan liksom öppna upp mina känslor så mycket så att det känns som att...

"don't know, if you could say that one have some sort of, kind of, emotional, fine-sensitivity of some sort, by being involved a lot with music, I think.

"Tror jag, att man *paus* vet inte, om man kan säga att man har nån form av liksom... känslomässigt, finkänslighet av nåt slag, av att hålla på mycket med musik, tror jag."

"letting emotions out of the system"

Men så också alltså, att vara, jag kan ju bli jätteuppumpad av att, när jag är glad, av att lyssna på glad musik och peppande musik och bara.. hoppa runt i min lägenhet i min ensamhet och sjunga och dansa och släppa ut lite känslor. Glada känslor också.

I had sang out and it was as if everything had splashed against the wall, and that all my feelings were up on the walls like paint. Because I had expressed myself and didn't have anything else to hide, in that sense.

Jag hade sjungit ut och så hade liksom allt liksom, splashats mot väggen och ehm att alla mina känslor satt på väggen som färg typ, ehm. För att jag liksom hade uttryck mig och jag hade liksom ingenting mer att dölja liksom, just i den meningen.

Listening to happy, peppy, eh, swinging music is something that can… has very so, eh... can give a very strong eh, well, mood-effect. Yeah, give a lot of joy and energy, get one to wake up and get one to kinda want to move, dance or jump. Kind of anything.

Att lyssna på glad, peppig, eh, svängig musik, är nånting som kan.. har väldigt så eh, kan ge en väldigt stark eh ja humörs-effekt, ja ge väldigt mycket glädje och energi. Få

en att vakna till. och få en att liksom vilja röra på sig , dansa, springa eller hoppa. Vad som helst liksom.

It is nice sometimes, when something is too heavy. But not…, some things you don't to dig yourself into. And with some thing you do, so.. to be in a little. Ehm, milder forms of sorrow for example. Where there is a relatable effect, or how to say.

för att det är nåt skönt ibland, i att, eh, eh, då har det ju mycket med att grotta ner sig i en känsla. Eh som kan vara.. eh..och det kan vara skönt ibland, när det är nåt för tungt. Alltså inte nåt som är för… vissa saker vill man ju inte grotta ner sig i. Och vissa saker vill man de, så.. vara i lite. Eh, lätta former av sorg, till exempel. Eller 'lättare' former av sorg kanske. Eh.. Och det … så där finns det en viss så.. alltså en relaterade effekt eller hur man ska säga

"involuntarily start to listen to the music through my instrument. And at the same time try to play along in my head."

Och då när jag liksom, har en väldigt teoretisk analys av det ofta när jag lyssnar på musiken, eh, så kan det bli väldigt, mer stressande av att redan ha nånting som jag behöver göra, men att också nästa ofrivilligt lyssna på musiken utifrån mitt instrument liksom. Samtidigt liksom försöka spela med i huvudet.

"listen to white noise as a way of cleansing"

Deltagare: Eftersom att det är mitt yrke å ehm ibland så blir det mycket liksom. Då är ju min stress liksom, på grund av musiken och då kanske jag bara väljer å lyssna på brus liksom och, jag vet inte det kanske man kan kalla musik också, det är ju liksom frekvenser som liksom ehm, jamen typ 'white noise', om du har hört om det.

Intervjuare: Ja, jag tror jag har hört om det, jag visste inte att folk höll på med det haha.

Deltagare: haha, ja men det är min 'go to' istället för att höra liksom "chill piano music, when meditating" liksom, så kanske bara är en sån liksom. Jag stänger ute hela världen liksom och det är väldigt effektivt, för låter liksom bara "schhhhhhhhh (ljudeffekt)" och man kan bara liksom, ja. Om det (inte) är för mycket som händer så känns det eh, cleansing på nåt sätt. Det känns renande.

"if it is a high tempo or, eh, music being played quickly."

"Men, vad det nu kan va' om det är höga tempon eller om eh, musik som spelas fort."

"music is a form of relief"

Vi människor har en tendens att tänka för mycket, speciellt kvinnor tänker över väldigt mycket och att musiken är en form av relief, visst du lägger ned mycket tid och tänker mycker på konstruktion och så men det är bara grunderna, sedan när det väl är konsert ska du bara leverera och inte tänka någonting.

When you play with others you have to be focused in a completely different way, it becomes a kind of social focus to create something together that is very beautiful. When one is only playing for oneself then one can simply drop it in a way, nothing happens if one doesn't complete or isn't super focused. In that way it is better to play with others but when playing with others one might get nervous and depressed thinking one isn't good. If one is playing alone one can do whatever one wants without anyone having to care.

Ja, jo det kan... men det beror på hur... när du spelar, om du spelar musik med andra människor så är det väldigt väldigt olikt från att spela med sig själv. När du spelar med andra så måste du vara fokuserad på ett helt annat sätt, då blir det ett slags socialt fokus att man skapar något ihop som är väldigt vackert. När man bara spelar för sig själv så kan ju bara hoppa av typ, det händer inget om man inte fullföljer eller inte är superfokuserad. På så sätt är det bättra att spela med andra men när man spelar med andra så kanske man blir nervös och deppig tycker att man inte är bra. Om man spelar för sig själv så kan man göra vad man vill utan någon behöver bry sig.

"to get away from the feeling of everyday-life"

"Ja.. för det finns ju liksom inget här, det finns ju inget eh, ingen känsla av vardag längre."

"I'm very sensitive to too many impressions, and therefore it can be nice to put on music when sitting on the bus, to not get overwhelmed by everything going on around me"

Jag kan tycka att det är ganska jobbigt liksom till exempel på bussen eller ute på stan, om det blir liksom mycket intryck kan jag tycka va' ganska jobbigt. Då kan jag tycka det är väldigt skönt att liksom få lyssna på musik.

I think the most important thing with music for me, among other things, is perhaps that there is not much in the broad scheme of things that is right or wrong. Instead, in music one has all the right to feel exactly what you want, about it. Even if there are a

bunch of theories and practicalities on how things should be done, in the best way, there is this… it is encouraged to break some rules. Because nothing is really, there is nothing that isn't okay to do or to feel.

Deltagare: Ja.. *lång paus* Det finns ju otroligt mycket såklart, tycker jag. Men eh. *paus* jag tror att det, ja det viktigaste med musik för mig, bland mycket annat, är kanske att *paus* det finns egentligen inte så mycket i det stora hela som är rätt eller fel.

Intervjuare: Mm.

Deltagare: Utan i musik så har man liksom all rätt att känna precis vad man vill, om det, och att tolka det precis hur man vill. Eh, även om det finns.. tonvis med.. teorier och praktiker och hur saker bör göras, på bäst sätt, så finns det alltid i musiken, tycker jag, det hära att.. det uppmuntras att man bryter lite regler.

"it's a place where you can feel and express the extreme emotions, for example in opera when you sing out loud from the top of your lungs - expressing being sad or angry for six minutes straight - it is very liberating."

"Men just inom klassiskt så är det ju också såhär, alltså, klassisk musik, det är ju inga små känslor man håller på med. Det är ju extremerna, så att det går, är du ledsen så står du i 6 minuter och sjunger samma fras: jag är ledsen, jag är ledsen, jag är ledsen! och det är ofta samma text i 6 minuter tid basically. Eh för att poängtera hur ledsen du är. Ehm. Och med, det är just det som jag kan, det är då jag kan bortse från texterna ibland, och sammanhanget, att det kan vara ganska frigörande att få stå och bara *andas ut* liksom trycka på, hur, bitter en är på nånting, eller hur glad en är, om man är glad i 6 minuter. Öhm. Åh Ja, det är väldigt, frigörande, att få lov att känna dom extrema känslorna."

Music is just beautiful. It is like flowers. They aren't there for one to make use of them, perhaps. One can make use of music but words are little more clear while music, it is something which makes people into something a little more divine sort of. It is something greater, it is something which can unite everyone

Musik är bara vackert. Det är som blommor. De finns inte där för att man ska använda sig av dem kanske. Man kan använda sig av musik men ord är lite mer tydligt medans {84} musik, det är något som gör människor till något lite mer gudomligt typ, det är någonting större, det är någonting som kan förena alla

It is very much that it has just existed as a thing for a very long time. Maybe certainly in that way, like in a way that it was available so to speak. That there was a choir in grade school which one could be a part of after school, eh, and then that… started music class in fourth grade or something like that or yes, fourth grade. And was… was like that just a certain… it wasn't like I didn't feel anything, I maybe just thought it seemed fun and people talked about it and my parents, eh, encouraged me to do it.

Alltså.. Där är det väldigt så, att det har funnits med bara, som en grej väldigt länge. Kanske visst så där, alltså på ett sätt att det fanns tillgängligt så att säga. Att det fanns en kör på lågstadiet som man kunde va med i efter skolan eh. Och sen att, började musikklass när jag gick i fyran eller nåt sånt, eller ja fyran. Och var var det väl bara sådär ja en viss, det var inte så att jag kände nåt, jag kanske bara tyckte att det verkade kul och många pratade om det och mina föräldrar eh uppmuntrade mig att göra det. Så att vad som liksom, sådär från början är väldigt svårt.

"I have done that very much on the way to the job, for example one tries to listen to music which doesn't start even more like negative emotions but something which is a little more positive."

"Det har jag gjort väldigt mycket på väg till jobbet till exempel man försöker man försöker lyssna på musik som inte sätter igång ännu mer liksom negativa känslor utan något som är mer lite positivt."

"saying want you want in the moment"

jazz är ju improvisationsmusik. Eh, tycker jag känns, eller det ligger absolut närmast mitt hjärta liksom. Eh, och det gör det för att jag tycker att det är, att kunna liksom, att kunna improvisera.. Är, det är som att eh, det är som att man liksom säger det man tycker precis just då.

It is like one… well one becomes one with the music, like one becomes filled up or one… one feel that like yes and then one forgets oneself, so I think it is a kind of ascension into something else, a little like being in love and like that… it is very hard to express.

Det är liksom att man… ja man blir lite ett med musiken, liksom man blir uppfylld eller man… man känner det att liksom yes och sedan glömmer man sig själv så jag tror att det är ett slags uppgående i något annat, lite att vara kär och så där… det är väldigt svårt att berätta