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MUSIC AND THE EMOTIONAL REGULATION OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: A DESCRIPTIVE EXPERIENCE SAMPLING STUDY

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Submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF SOCIAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RESEARCH

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at the University of the

Witwatersrand

March 2025

Supervisor: Dr Michael Pitman

STUDENT DECLARATION

I, Antonina Mamontov, hereby declare that the dissertation I submit for the degree Master of Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand is my personal, autonomous work. This dissertation has not been submitted previously at/in another university or faculty. Furthermore, I cede the copyright of this dissertation to the University of the Witwatersrand.



Antonina Mamontov

March 2025

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Music expresses that which cannot be said and on which it is impossible to be silent." Victor Hugo

I would like to thank my research supervisor, Dr Michael Pitman, for assisting and supporting me throughout the research process and the critical reader of the project, Dr Nicky Israel, for her enthusiasm and belief in the study whilst it was in the early stages of development. Also, thank you to the participants for their time and dedication.

Abstract

The research study had a main research objective. The primary objective was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of students studying at the University of the Witwatersrand while listening to music in relation to their perception of with particular emphasis on emotional regulation and the functions that music plays in their lives both related to emotional regulation and not. This was done to ascertain how these experiences were similar and contrasted each other. To do this, the participants were contacted on WhatsApp on three occasions whilst they were in their naturalistic environments. If they were listening to music when contacted, they reflected on that experience of listening to music. As it was not possible to control if the participants were listening to music or not, if they were not listening to music when contacted, they reflected on a recent experience of doing so. A qualitative and ideographic research design was used for the research study. Psychology course coordinators emailed a participant invitation with a link to a screening survey to postgraduate and undergraduate Psychology students at the University of the Witwatersrand; the first twelve suitable participants received a link to a demographic questionnaire. These twelve participants completed a reflective survey on three different occasions, reflecting on a recent experience(s) of listening to music when contacted. Finally, the reflections and their general experiences of listening to music were discussed in semi-structured interviews. The reflections and interview transcripts were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, which generated two themes: *Experiences of listening to music being meaningful when powerful* and *The meaningful functions of listening to music.* The strength of the study is its explorative and unpresumptuous approach, but a limitation of it that could be addressed by future longitudinal research that could explore musical experiences at different times.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background and Context

Music has been an area of study which is understandable given its cross-cultural applicability and the diverse experiences that individuals have of listening to music which range from positive experiences during which negative emotions such as anger, nostalgia and sadness (Garrido & Schubert, 2013, Sharman & Dingle, 2013) and can have the positive function of facilitating emotional regulation though musical frequencies that produce desirable neural activation (Cook, 2019; Moore, 2013). In the following study, the experiences of Psychology students studying at the University of the Witwatersrand as their listen to music in different natural settings was explored specifically in relation to emotional regulation, the other emotional aspects of the experience**s** as well as the different functions that listening to music plays in their lives.

Aims and Objectives

The research study had a main objective. The primary objective was to explore the lived experiences and perceptions of students studying at the University of the Witwatersrand while listening to music in relation to the emotional aspects of the experiences with particular focus on the emotional regulation and the functions that music plays in their lives both related to emotional regulation and not. This was done to ascertain how these experiences were similar and contrasted each other. The descriptions of the experiences were not prescriptive. However, they were analysed in relation to any descriptions of emotions (e.g., their changes in valence and intensity). Secondly, the research study explored how the participants described their perceptions of the role of music during momentary experiences of listening to music and in general.

Rationale

It has been suggested that music can elicit different emotions such as sadness, joy, happiness, anger and love (Juslin, 2013; Vuilleumie & Trost, 2015) , and emotional experiences can be actively facilitated by music across different cultures with different cultural norms (Blasco-Magraner et al., 2023; Liew et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2021 Nguyen et al., 2023; Randall et al., 2022). It is common for youth from all cultural backgrounds to listen to music as it is readily available, generally inexpensive and might have the potential to benefit their emotional well-being by changing emotions, changing behaviours and improving their participation in academic tasks (Hu et al., 2021). Despite this, there is limited research on music in African contexts (Carl & Kutsidzo, 2016, Eddison, 2024). Music can be perceived to be pleasurable by individuals who listen to it and listening to music has the potential to facilitate positive affective experiences, assist with emotional regulation during times of emotional distress (Coulthard et al., 2023), enhance interpersonal functioning (Koehler et al., 2023) and enhance psychological well-being (Ning, 2023) . Music can play an important role in psychological functioning through its use as entertainment (Monterio et al., 2023), developing personal well-being (Merry & Silverman, 2021) and building social and personal identities (Uhlig et al., 2017); individuals listen to music in a variety of situations, such as when exercising (Randall et al., 2022), trying to be productive (Randall et al., 2017), and participating in performance arts (Uhlig et al., 2017).

University students might possibly listen to music for its psychological benefits such as the social connection that listening to music might foster (Gurgen, 2016) and the emotional regulation that listening to music can facilitate (Vidas, 2025). This is understandable as tertiary students might experience unique problems related to social interactions with peers, academic difficulties, home responsibilities, and funding their studies that might make them experience emotional dysregulation (Bamberger & Smith, 2023; Morton & Ramos, 2023).

Despite this, a lot of research is conducted on school-going children (Blasco-Magraner et al., 2021, Kotsopoulou & Hallam, 2010). As university students go through a transitionary period of development that can be emotionally distressing (Bantjies et al., 2023, Olasupo et al., 2018, Paul & Saikia, 2024), and they are likely to use music in naturalistic environments to regulate their emotions for different purposes in their everyday lives (How et al., 2022; Hu et al., 2021), there is a gap in research of exploring what this population uses music for and what they perceive to be the significant about the experiences of listening to music . This research gap was addressed by implementing a methodology known as descriptive experience sampling (DES). This approach allows researcher to explore the aspects of a momentary experience known as a "pristine inner experience" (the experiences experienced by individuals in their natural environments) that participants deem most relevant when they are contacted by the researcher (Hurlburt, 2011; Hurlburt & Heavey, 2001; Moss et al., 2020). This means that participants were able reflect on the role of listening to music in different circumstances and environments.

Music-related research studies have predominantly been quantitative in nature, whilst qualitative research studies that explore music have only emerged in the 2000s (How et al. 2022). The study adds to the body of qualitative literature on the experiences of listening to music. A PRISMA review of research on music practice (How et al., 2022) showed that existing music-related studies explored problem-solving (Chaffin et al., 2003), practicing musical skills (Huber et al., 2019), and mindfulness practice (Lam, 2020). The majority of research studies have not specifically explored emotional regulation using a DES approach in settings in which emotions are not induced in a laboratory setting (Randell et al., 2014) or in contexts in which participants are likely to be guaranteed to be listening to music by virtue of being music students (Bailes, 2015, Cotter & Silvia, 2017) or at a music festival or concert (Moss et al., 2020, Wood et al., 2015) . The explorative nature of the study had the potential

to add to -the body of research that explored musical experiences. Moreover, participants were also able to mention novel ideas, perspectives and opinions because their experiences of listening to music occurred in their natural environments. These environments were not the same or stipulated by the researcher. A more nuanced understanding of how the roles of listening to music and emotional regulation facilitated by listening to music can change in different contexts like at home and on campus could be explored.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

This literature review is a summary of existing studies conducted on music. The literature review starts with an introduction to the general importance of listening to music and moves onto discussing themes such as the general significance of listening to music and musical experiences, responses to listening to music, music and emotions, the uses of music, music and emotional regulation, music, stress and coping.

The General Significance of Music

Listening to music is an activity that is engaged in universally by people of different ages and socio-economic backgrounds (Cross, ,2009). . Listening to music may also accompanied with other creative activities such as dancing and singing. Given its cultural significance and popularity, music and musical experiences have been researched extensively by existing studies. Despite this, there is limited research that qualitatively explores lived and naturalistic experiences of listening to music in a South African context specifically. It is of value to explore how South African university students describe their perceptions of their experiences of listening to music as students are might possibly to listen to music to experience the psychological benefits during their transition to university and to cope with the stressors associated with being a tertiary student. To do so, it is necessary to establish what has already been explored about music by existing researchers.

Musical Experiences

As music is culturally universal and significant, people have musical experiences that will be discussed. Both positive and negative experiences of listening to music can be autonomously engaged in or not (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). There is a variety of experiences of listening to music that individuals can engage in. Listening to self-selected music is an

example of a type of experience of listening to music. Self-selected music has the characteristics of being autonomously chosen and be uniquely interpreted and perceived and based on the past experiences of the listener (Batt-Rawden, 2010; Biagini et al., 2012). Physical musical experiences might involve somatic changes such as lowered blood pressure and respiratory rate (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). Emotional musical experiences can encompass changes in emotions, experiencing desirable, intense or conflicting emotions (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). Perception musical experiences involve tactile or visual perceptions (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). Some potential cognitive benefits of listening to music might involve problem-solving, imagery, and recalling memories (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). Finally, trance-like experiences of listening to music encompass religious experiences of listening to music and experiences of listening to music that are unlike previous ones (Nagy & Szabó, 2004). The current study had the strength of not limiting the participants to reflect on a specific type of musical experience, so a diverse range of musical experience could be explored.

Musical Preferences

Music preference amongst other potential factors can determine the experiences of listening to music. Music preferences are possibly determined by personality (Sarrikallio, 2014) . Music can arouse different emotions based on tempo, genre, volume and its ability to elicit pleasant autobiographical memories (Upadhyay et al., 2017) amongst other possible factors. A possible theoretical framework to understand musical preferences is the aesthetic experience of the music framework (Nieminen et al., 2012; Schäfer et al., 2013). This framework proposes that musical preferences could possibly develop through musical exposure and are common amongst family members (Nieminen et al., 2012; Schäfer et al., 2013). Past studies have asserted that more spontaneous and affective responses might potentially govern musical choices, functions and preferences (Nieminen et al., 2012; Schäfer et al., 2013). In a review of literature in a cross-sectional article, it was stating that

recognising emotions like sadness can possibly be facilitated through factors such as the tempo and rhythm of the music amongst others (Nieminen et al., 2012). Musical preferences being based on the "correctness" of music like its tempo and rhythm are formed through cognitively based mechanised that occur as a result of musical exposure (Nieminen et al., 2012). Interestingly, literature has contested the notion that musical preferences are merely cognitively-based and suggest that there is an emotional component to musical preferences (Nieminen et al., 2012). As Descriptive Experience Sampling studies are open-ended in nature (Engelbert & Carrutherst, 2011), this allowed participants to reflect upon their preferences in musical genres as well as how their musical preferences have changed with time.

Music and Emotions

The various musical experiences outlined above can be associated with emotions. The emotions that individuals feel while listening to music are known as "musical emotions", and the emotions felt after listening to musical stimuli are referred to in research studies as the emotional outcome of listening to music (Juslin, 2019).

Listening to music has been shown to be a useful way to regulate affect (Adiasto et al., 2023), enhancing self-esteem (Sun, 2022), facilitating positive emotions (Croom, 2015) and promoting communication skills in children, adolescents and adults (Nguyen et al., 2023). Individuals are potentially motivated to seek affective experiences they desire to experience (Liew et al., 2023); thus, they are likely to listen to music that makes them feel desired emotions (Scherer & Coutinho, 2013) or to fulfil a specific role of ruminating on specific emotions (Larwood & Dingle, 2022) .A specific emotional outcome of listening to music could possibly be related to pleasure experienced as a result of listening to music, the meaning that musical lyrics have to listeners and how long the musical experience lasts for

amongst other determinants (Lamont, 2011). Music can potentially illicit desirable and undesirable emotions (Cotter, 2018). Some of the possible emotions that are can be elicited by music include happiness, sadness, calmness and impulsivity (Carl & Kutsidzo, 2016; Cotter, 2018). Although research has shown that music can possibly be used to enhance emotional and psychological wellbeing, the extent to which it can do so has been contested. In a critical interpretive synthesis with a convergent parallel study that had the aim of interrogating two sets of studies exploring music and well-being in young populations, it was found that listening to the same music can have different effects on people depending on their baseline levels of wellbeing (McFerran, 2016). The study also found that young people were not always able to explore or describe their experiences of listening to music (McFerran, 2016). DES studies account for this by often encouraging participants to reflect upon multiple experiences of listening to music given that some experiences may be described shortly or not in sufficient detail. As a DES study allowed for participants to reflect on experiences of listening to music in natural environments (Sloboda et al., 2001), they can reflect on the environmental or contextual factors that enhanced their wellbeing and are not related to listening to music.

The way that studies have thought about listening to music has shifted from an understanding that music acts upon the emotions of listeners to listeners using music for specific purposes that relate to their emotions. In a historical overview conducted on influence of listening to music on emotions, which aimed to outline and connect musical literature that acknowledge music-induced emotions, which have the components of subjective feeling, psychological arousal, expression, action tendency, and regulation (Lazarus, 2013; Moore, 2017). According to the review, most of the first studies that emerged about music and emotions acknowledged that emotions experienced whilst or as a result of somatic changes that occur as a result of listening to music (Lazarus, 2013; Moore, 2017).

The review described a shift to theories more aligned to Richard Lazurus' cognitive-relational-motivational theory that involves 1) an interaction between the environment and an individual 2) mediating processes that influence an emotional experience such as appraisal, action tendency and unique psychological response patterns, and 3) and short-term outcomes (Moore, 2017). This theory also described that the functions of emotions are adaptive and are a response to an environmental need or stress (Lazarus, 2013, Moore, 2017)

Music and Emotional Regulation

Although listening to music can have more general emotional benefits, listening to music is an activity that can possibly facilitate emotional regulation. Emotional regulation is defined as the ability to alter the type, trajectory, intensity and appropriateness of one's emotions or emotional experiences and requires an evaluation of one's emotional state as well as the utilisation of executive functioning to be able to evaluate social situations and emotional states more generally (Christiansen et al., 2019; Ford and Gross, 2019; Roth et al., 2019; Sheppes et al., 2015). In a quantitative study that explored emotional regulation in individuals between the ages of 18-61 years with ADHD, emotional dysregulation was defined as the inability to appropriately change or maintain an emotional state is known as emotional dysregulation (Bodalski et al., 2019). In an integrative review that was used to describe emotions and literature about emotional regulation, a theoretical framework used to understand emotional regulation strategies is John Gross' Process Model of Emotional Regulation. This model highlights that an initial perception of a dysregulated emotion signals emotional regulation is required (Gross, 1998,). In an article that described Gross' process model as literature within the emotional regulation research area, it was described that emotional regulation is required by the person who is emotionally dysregulated, processes occur that determine which emotional regulation strategy or tactic occur (Gross, 2015).

The Process Model of Emotional Regulation by John Gross outlines strategies such as situation selection, situation modification, attentional deployment, cognitive change, and response modulation (Bucich & MacCann, 2019; Gross, 1998). *Situation selection* refers to the process of influencing one's emotions by avoiding or approaching certain people, places, or objects (Ford & Gross, 2019). An example of engaging in situation selection would be avoiding listening to music in situations in which doing so would elicit negative emotions.

Another strategy of emotional regulation includes *situational modification. Situational modification* requires adjusting a situation to change its emotional repercussions and requires individuals to understand the distressing aspects of a situation (Bucich & MacCann, 2019; Gross, 1998). This problem-focused form of coping requires a change in the environment to fulfil emotional needs (Gross, 1998). An example of using music to engage in situational modification requires a person to modify the emotional content of a stressful situation by listening to music during these tense times.

Attentional deployment refers to the process of selectively focusing on an aspect of a situation through distraction and rumination (Gross, 1998, 2015; Keltner & Gross, 1999). In distraction, attention is given to a non-emotional aspect of a situation or by completely diverting from the immediate situation (Bucich & MacCann, 2019; Gross, 1998, 2015), whereas *rumination* involves focusing on the emotional consequences of a situation (Gross, 1998, 2015). Using music to distract from disrupting environments or distressing emotions is an example of distraction and listening to music to think intensely about positive or negative emotions can be an example of rumination. Ruminating on present emotions can sometimes result in the recollection of autobiographical memories (Belfi et al., 2016).

Cognitive change is a strategy of emotional regulation that requires actively choosing the meaning attached to a situation and changing one's belief regarding one's capability to

manage a situation or change its associated emotions (Gross, 1998; Massah et al., 2016). An example of using music to engage in cognitive change would be when using music to enhance one's motivation and belief that they are capable of passing an exam that one will write.

Finally, *response modulation*, which is late in the emotional generation process (Keltner & Gross, 1999; Sheppes et al., 2015), refers to changes in physiological, behavioural, or experiential responses to an emotion-eliciting situation (Torrence & Connelly, 2019). *Response modulation* involves inhibiting, controlling, or suppressing one's response to an emotion after an emotion has been activated to alter one's typical response (Gross, 1998; Torrence & Connelly, 2019). Response modulation entails using music to regulate one's anger and prevent one from screaming out of frustration. It has been suggested that the emotional regulation that occurs because of listening to music is a cumulative process most likely to be successful when individuals have emotional regulation as a goal before they start listening to music, as music can illicit emotions and alter their intensity (Mollakazemi et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2021; Randall et al., 2022). This change in emotional intensity is what needs to occur when listening to music to facilitate response modulation.

Engaging in emotional regulation is often done in situations in which individuals need to enhance their coping. Listening to self-selected music they perceive as pleasurable has psychological and emotional benefits. It has the potential to facilitate positive affective experiences, assist with emotional regulation during times of emotional distress and enhance interpersonal functioning and psychological well-being (Coulthard et al., 2023; Koehler et al., 2023; Ning et al., 2023). In addition to enhancing psychological well-being, music assists with emotional recognition and perception when it is present in movies (Cohen, 2010). In a book chapter written by Juslin in which definitions and concepts related to music and emotions were described, it was found that music influences mood indirectly by impacting

emotional states (Juslin, 2019). When listening to music, emotions can be changed based on the music's intensity, type, and complexity (Bachorowski & Braaten, 1994; Juslin, 2019). These changes can be temporary (Juslin, 2019). Also, these shifts can be encapsulated in terms of dimensions such as arousal and valence or qualitatively distinct categories (e.g., anger), which are both important in further research (Juslin, 2019).

The Functions of Listening to Music

Listening to music can have a diverse range of potential uses that can sometimes be unconscious. This paragraph will outline some examples of these uses like enhancing motivation, focus, religious wellbeing and for entertainment. An existing study which explored the role of music in an academic environment has shown that music can potentially enhance energy and motivation (Vigl et al., 2023).The open-ended reflective and interview questions can allow participants to mention if and how and if they use music to enhance motivation specifically. Music can possibly enhance focus and concentration in specific situations and under specific conditions (Schäfer & Fachner, 2015). Listening to music that has been autonomously selected and does not result in listeners becoming distracted by ruminating on memories can possibly enhance focus and motivation particularly (Schäfer & Fachner, 2015). In some circumstances music can potentially be distracting for some and can enhance focus for others (Sloboda et al., 2001). An open-ended DES interview allowed for participants to mention contradictions and nuances in their experiences. They could describe different instances of listening to music in which music served specific but different uses. In addition to being related to motivation and focus, listening to music can have a religious use (Demmrich, 2020).

Music and Religion

Existing literature that discussed the function of religious music delineated the use of religious music for religious expression especially when the musical lyrics are in an understandable dialect (Atiemo, 2006). As South Africans ascribe to different religions (Agawu, 2022; Bafford, 2023), potentially exploring the religious function in an open-ended and non-prescriptive fashion could provide insight and detail into the use of music in religious contexts. In an existing study that had the aim of evaluating experiencing sampling as a method to explore experiences of listening to music, a main strength of the approach was that it allows for an open-ended and non-prescriptive exploration of everyday experiences (Sloboda et al., 2001), so the participants were able to mention the religious function of listening to music and what this function means to them.

Listening to Music to Facilitate Coping

When observing music's role in alleviating stress, listening to music can be conceptualised as a potential coping strategy used to redirect one's attention from emotional stress or arousal (Krause et al., 2023; Monteiro et al., 2021). This study conceptualised music as a means of coping or stress alleviation according to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping. As emotional regulation is often required when experiencing negative emotions, the open-ended nature of the study allowed for participants to explain how they use music for emotional matching.

According to Lazarus and Folkman's Transactional Model of Stress and Coping, stress is defined as the body's internal response to a threatening external stimulus (Baltazar et al., 2019; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) and, if experienced continuously, can result in negative health outcomes, increased anxiety, and depression (Krause et al., 2023). The amount of stress a person experiences is related to their belief in the capacity to manage it (Lazarus &

Folkman, 1984). Coping refers to the cognitive and behavioural ways in which a person can manage the perceived threat (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Problem-based strategies may include practical, action-based attempts to manage a stressor (Kaveh et al., 2023; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Emotion-based strategies might involve any attempts to cope by dealing with the emotional impact of the stressor (Kaveh et al., 2023; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Listening to music can be seen as an emotion-based coping strategy as it involves changing the emotional repercussions of a stressful situation. In contrast, when music is used to stimulate creative ideas when overwhelmed by a project, it is a problem-based strategy of coping.

A study that is explorative, non-prescriptive and descriptive in nature was warranted as participants could elaborate in depth about the specific functions that music plays in their lives (Greasley et al., 2013), give meaning to their lived experiences of listening to music (Reed, 2018), and facilitate probing (Parker, 2011). Although much quantitative research has been conducted on musical experiences, their limitations are often centred around the fact that closed-ended surveys might not capture the details of a participant's experience and meaning-making process to the extent that an open-ended interview in which they explain and elaborate on their thoughts and feelings might (Liew et al., 2023).

Research Questions

- Do university students describe meaningful experiences of listening to music that are linked to their emotions and emotional regulation or not?
- If so, how are any emotional experiences related to music described and how are these linked to emotional regulation specifically? How are these themes, the absence of themes or novel themes linked to existing literature?
- How to the participants describe their perceptions of the role of music in their lives?

- How is the role of music related to the intensity of the participants' stress and coping?
- Did the university students describe any experiences of listening to music that were unusual to the experiences that they typically have?

CHAPTER 3

Methodology

This section describes the design of the study, the characteristics of the participants, the sampling strategy utilised to recruit the participants, the instruments used to obtain the data from the recruited participants and the procedure used to collect and analyse the data.

Research Design

The research study had the aim of investigating experiences of listening to music in students on three specific occasions and the emotional aspects of the experiences especially related to emotional regulation. A qualitative and ideographic research design was used for the research study, and the demographic data provided by the participants was utilised to understand their contexts and relationships with music. An ideographic research approach allows for the focus on the specific and subjective lived experiences and descriptions of individuals (Piccirillo & Rodebaugh, 2019; Siedlecki, 2020). As the participants themselves described their specific experiences and relationships with music, an ideographic research approach was suitable. The study was situated in an interpretivist paradigm that makes the ontological assumptions that reality is socially constructed, and that individuals' knowledge and truth are relative and shaped by their experiences and context (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). As a result, the researcher's understanding and interpretation of the participants' experiences of listening to music were shaped by the participants' own unique perceptions and experiences. The participants also had a unique understanding, interpretation, and perception of their own experiences of listening to music, which were informed by prior experiences of listening to music and the values of the communities in which they live. Although justified in its use, an ideographic and qualitative research approach did mean that there was the potential for the researcher to interpret the findings in a biased manner in which

their own experiences overly informed the analysis of the participants' experiences. Moreover, conducting semi-structured interviews required the researcher to remain focused for a long period of time. The researcher had to ensure that they were constantly focusing on the detailed explanation of the participants' experiences without omitting information that was potentially critical for the purpose of answering the research questions.

Descriptive experience sampling (DES) allows a researcher to observe participants while going about their daily activities (e.g., when listening to music). DES had the main strength of allowing participants to express novel ideas about their experiences of listening to music that might have been difficult to capture in a closed-ended survey. A limitation of DES is that the researchers had to contact the participants directly, and the participants were not always available to respond to the reflective questionnaire immediately. On the other hand, Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) allows researchers to extract the prominent common and contrasting experiences from the reflective surveys and interview transcripts related to listening to music that can form the basis of themes (Alase, 2017, Hurlburt & Heavey, 2001, Moss et al., 2020). In this study, these themes encapsulated how the participants described their experiences of listening to music especially in relation to emotional regulation. IPA is a form of analysis that allowed for the specific and meaning making process of the individual participants during experiences of listening to music. The study reflected on the ways in which the participants perceive their everyday experiences of listening to music.

Participants and Sampling

Twelve participants were recruited from the University of the Witwatersrand's Psychology Department. The participants were between the ages of 19 to 38 and indicated speaking English, Afrikaans, Zulu and Sotho. Three of the participants indicated being male

(25%), and nine (75%) indicated being female. Most of the participants indicated being postgraduate participants, with approximately 33% of the participants being undergraduate students. All the participants frequently listened to music in different situations, and two of them had musical training. The musical preferences of the participants included rock, Gospel, Kwaito, Jazz and Classical music. See Table 1 for a full outline of the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1:

Table Showing the Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

Pseudonym	**Age**	**Musical training**	**Genre preferences**	**Listening frequency**	**Pre-identified role**
Participant A	26	None	Gospel House Kwaito	3-4 hours	To relax To get you in a good mood
Participant B	34	None	Classical House	1-2 hours	To relax To get you in a good mood
Participant C	19	Piano and voice	Gospel Classical	3-4 hours	To relax To concentrate To get you in a good mood To block out sound
Participant D	24	Guitar	Classical Rock	More than 6 hours	To concentrate To relax To get you in a good mood To block out sound
Participant E	20	None	Hip-hop Jazz Classical	1-2 hours	To concentrate To relax To get you in a good mood

					To block out sound To cope with my emotions
Participant F	22	None	Rock Classical House Electronic/trance House Gospel	1-2 hours	To concentrate To relax To get you in a good mood
Participant G	38	None	Hip-hop Jazz Classical Gospel	1-2 hours	To relax To block out sound
Participant H	38	None	Gospel House	Less than an hour	To relax
Participant I	24	None	Hip-hop	5-6 hours	To concentrate To relax To get you in a good mood To block out sound
Participant J	24	None	Jazz Classical Gospel	1-2 hours	To relax To get you in a good mood
Participant K	22	None	Rock	3-4 hours	To concentrate To relax To get you in a good mood To block out sound
Participant L	21	None	Gospel	1-2 hours	To concentrate To get you in a good mood

					To block out sound

Although students may potentially experience difficulties with emotional regulation and academic functioning, some have shown a tendency to be resilient in existing research (Bantjies et al., 2021; Reed et al., 2018). This resilience can be determined by certain personality factors such as the ability to perceive, assimilate, and manage their emotions as well as the emotions of others (Valverde-Janer et al., 2023); . Due to the interpersonal and relational nature of their field of study, psychology students specifically were likely to be able to describe the ways they experience their emotions in sufficient detail and were an appropriate sample. These psychology students indicated listening to music frequently and in different settings, including on campus. Furthermore, they indicated when there were most to be likely to be listening to music when contacted by the researcher in a demographic survey Exclusion criteria included major hearing impairments that altered how music is experienced, students who did not have cellular phones with internet access, and students who did not listen to music frequently. Such individuals might not have been able to describe their experience of listening to music in detail.

Recruiting the above-mentioned participants required the use of an established sampling strategy. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which units are selected based on certain specified characteristics (Campbell et al., 2020). Purposive sampling in this study involved recruiting participants who were likely to be listening to music, who listened to music frequently, and who could describe their experiences of listening to music. Once established that participants would be students from specific psychology modules who meet specific inclusion criteria, the researcher contacted the course

coordinators of the modules to recruit the participants on the Ulwazi platform that post academic content on.

The University of the Witwatersrand has a large pool of students who accessed a participant invitation posted on Ulwazi (see Appendix E). This invitation had a link to a screening survey. This survey was used to screen for suitable participants (see Appendix G). The researcher sent the first twelve suitable participants a link to a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H) using the student email addresses provided in the screening survey. Using this link, they accessed the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (see Appendix C), a consent form to participate in the study's first phase (see Appendix D) and provided demographic information. Existing IPA research recommends a sample size of about 5-12 participants (Alase, 2017; Noon, 2018), and DES studies tend to utilise a sample size of about 8-9 participants (Moss et al., 2020; Sloboda et al., 2001). The data was analysed using IPA and collected using DES; therefore, the researcher deemed it appropriate to source between eight and 12 participants (Noon, 2018).

Instruments

The research instruments in this study were used to identify and recruit participants and collect data from them. These instruments were informally pilot-tested to ensure they worked effectively. The instruments were a screening survey, demographic questionnaire, reflective questionnaire, and semi-structured interviews.

Screening Survey

The screening survey in the study (see Appendix G) was self-constructed and comprised eight questions to ensure that the participants met the criteria of being psychology students who regularly listen to music in different settings. The survey was relevant for the sample through the inclusion of likely settings that the students would be listening to music in

like in their car whilst travelling to a lecture, a specific music class that they take as an extracurricular activity between or after lectures classes, or at home whist studying for tests or exams. The survey aimed to identify suitable participants to participate in the study and provide the researcher with student email addresses to send them a demographic questionnaire. The questions in the questionnaire included:

1) Are you a student studying at the University of the Witwatersrand?
2) Do you listen to music frequently?
3) Do you listen to music throughout the week and in different settings (e.g., in your car, in a music class, on campus or at home)?
4) Do you have hearing problems?
5) Do you have a cellular phone on which you can access the internet?

Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic questionnaire (see Appendix H and Appendix I) used in the study was self-constructed and comprised 19 questions. The questionnaire allowed participants to gain more information about the study in the form of a Participant Information Sheet (see Appendix C), consent to participate in the reflective part of the study (see Appendix D) and provide demographic information such as their contact details, their preference in the musical genre, how long they were listening to music, how often they listened to music, and whether or not they received musical training. This allowed the researcher to understand the music listening habits of the participants as well as some of their characteristics that might inform their experiences of listening to music. The music genres in particular were relevant to a South African context. Some questions from the demographic questionnaire included:

1) What is your age in years?
2) Do you play one or more musical instruments?

3) Do you listen to music daily?

Reflective Questionnaire

The reflective questionnaire (see Appendix A) was self-constructed and comprised six questions. It aimed to encourage the participants to openly reflect upon and determine the significant aspects of their experiences of listening to music. This is in accordance with a DES framework, in which participants are able to reflect upon the significant or noteworthy aspects of an experience in a way that is not overly prompted by the researcher (Moss et al., 2020). The reflective questionnaire's questions were open-ended to establish the significant aspects of the participants' experiences of listening to music. These questions were specifically designed to understand the meaning-making processes of the participants as well as some of the elements of the experiences that were both good and bad that the participants perceived as noteworthy. The questions were purposely open-ended and did not insinuate that there was only one suitable way of being answered. This meant that the reflections could be specific to the individual participants meaning-making processes and experiences as well as the reflect the specific nature of the individual experiences of listening to music. Some questions in the reflective survey included:

1) If listening to music was beneficial, please reflect on these benefits or positive aspects of your experience at the time.
2) If you are listening to music at the time of being contacted, what are some elements of the experience that stand out for you?

Semi-structured Interview

The semi-structured interviews comprised approximately 10 questions and had an opening, funnelling or follow-up questions and a closing question (see Appendix B). The

interviews conducted in the study were open-ended to allow the researcher to explore experiences broadly and with minimal interference (Hurlburt, 2011; Hurlburt & Heavey, 2001). The questions aimed to explore the general attitudes and beliefs of the participants surrounding music and allow them to elaborate on the specific listening experiences they reflected on. The interview was loosely structured, and participants were asked similar questions about music, allowing them to elaborate, digress, or expand upon any questions. None of the questions were prescriptive, and there was a balance of questions that addressed the specific experiences of listening to music as well as the general meaningful aspects of experiences of listening to music generally. Examples of the interview questions included:

1) If so, how do experiences of listening to self-selected music link to your ability to stress?
2) Would you say that the experiences you have reflected on are similar to other experiences that you have had?
3) What aspects of the experiences were surprising or novel?

Procedure

The study was divided into two distinct phases: A reflective phase and an interview phase, which commenced concurrently. Before sourcing participants and commencing with the first phase, ethical clearance was obtained from HREC (non-medical) under the ethical clearance number MASPR-24-11. After receiving provisional ethical approval, the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand and the Head of Department of Psychology at the University of the Witwatersrand provided permission to source student participants (see Appendix F) before final ethical approval from the HREC was granted. A screening survey was distributed to postgraduate and undergraduate Psychology students by the course coordinators of Psychology modules in a participant invitation.

The first 12 suitable participants were contacted and given a link to a demographic questionnaire. The demographic questionnaire allowed participants to receive more information about the study in the Participant Information Sheet (PIS) , consent to participate in the first part of the study (see Appendix D) and provide demographic information. Once the twelve participants consented to participate in the first stage of the study, the researcher contacted them to participate in the reflective stage of the study. A reflective survey link was sent to their phones on three occasions. This survey allowed them to note any significant aspects of the experience of listening to music they had when contacted or a recent experience. The participants were contacted in everyday environments, such as on campus or in their homes, at the times they indicated they would be likely to listen to music. The participants were contacted to participate in individual semi-structured interviews approximately 24 hours after completing their final reflection. These interviews offered the opportunity for a more extensive reflection on the specific experiences of listening to music as well as their relationships with listening to music generally.

1.Bracketing and Reflexivity

Before collecting phenomenological data, the researcher engaged in reflexivity by stating all their assumptions and biases surrounding a phenomenon (Guillen, 2019) and bracketing by stating what they understand about a specific phenomenon (Smith, 2017). This process is depicted in Appendix J, in which the researcher stated what they understand about the concepts surrounding self-selected music and their assumptions surrounding these concepts.

2.Collecting lived experiences

The collecting lived experiences stage of a phenomenological study refers to the collection of data (Guillen, 2019). After engaging in background reading, reflectivity and

bracketing, the researcher collected data from three sources: the demographic questionnaire, the reflective questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews. These three data sources provided insight into the specific lived experiences of listening to music and the general beliefs and experiences of listening to music. Lived experiences of listening to music were momentary and related to specific instances of listening to music. The specific aspects of these experiences that stood out to the participants were the positive or negative aspects of the experiences and the impact of listening to music on emotional valence and intensity. These perceptions and experiences were their immediate impressions, thoughts and physical sensations during an experience of listening to music.

In the reflective phase of the study, the researcher contacted the participants via WhatsApp or another platform of their choice, such as IMessage or Telegram, while they were engaging in their daily activities on campus or any other environment they found themselves in. The cellular phones of the participants served as the "beepers" often used in DES studies to interrupt the participants during their days in order for them to reflect on a recent experience of listening to music or the experience of listening they had when contacted. On three separate occasions during a particular week, the researcher sent a link to all the participants' phones for them to complete a reflective questionnaire. The answers to the questions provided insight into their pristine inner (or lived) experiences of listening to music. The data was ideographic in nature; thus, it focused on the unique character of each of the experiences of listening to music. If the participants were not listening to music at the time of contact, the researcher asked them to reflect on a recent musical experience that occurred between 2-4 hours before being contacted, as this proved analytically significant. As the reflective questionnaires were analysed using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, it was appropriate for the participants to reflect on musical experiences that occurred 2-4 hours before being contacted by the researcher. Each reflective session took between 5-10 minutes.

The researcher arranged an in-person interview called an expositional interview after the participants had been contacted at times in a week as they had indicated they would likely be listening to music. These interviews were conducted approximately 24 hours after the third reflection with each participant. In these interviews, they reflected on the aspects of the momentary experiences of listening to music that were significant or meaningful to them in more depth and the phenomenon of their own unique experiences of listening to music. The interviews were conducted in a suitable central interview venue at the University of the Witwatersrand and lasted between 30 and 40 minutes. The researcher brought hard copies of the reflective questionnaire responses for the participants to use as memory prompts during their respective interviews. After the interview process, the participants shared more information about their responses and the process of participating in the research study.

These interviews were recorded and transcribed for the researcher to be able to analyse the transcriptions using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis. The researcher demonstrated reflexivity in a reflexivity journal, as they were instrumental in analysing the data once it was obtained.

Data analysis

Once collected, the phenomenological data was analysed. The data analysis phase of a phenomenological study is known as the reflecting on the lived experiences phase of the study (Guillen, 2019). The goal of analysing phenomenological data using IPA is to provide themes comprised of prominent quotes that reflect the meaning-making process of the participants, their lived experiences, beliefs and perceptions both within and across cases (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008; Larkin et al., 2019; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Williamon et al., 2021). IPA allows for participants to speak about their own perceptions, opinions and beliefs without being prescriptive, so this form of analysis allowed the researcher allowed the

participants to express the noteworthy and meaningful aspects of how they make meaning of their experiences of listening to music and if these meaning-making processes are linked to emotional regulation or not. IPA allowed for an exploration of how the participants' meaning-making processes and perceptions of the participants contrasted and related to existing literature and if their perceptions and experiences of listening to music are similar or can be explained by research that has already been conducted. Finally, IPA allowed for the research participants to express in detail how specific musical experiences and meaning-making processes differed or were similar to ones that they have had in the past.

Familiarisation With the Data

In order to ensure they had analysed the data accurately and that their interpretations reflected the meaning-making processes expressed by the participants (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008), the researcher re-read the demographic information, reflections and interview transcripts provided by the participants and made general summaries and notes of the information for the researcher's own reference (see Appendix K).

The demographic questionnaires provided the researcher with an understanding of the contextual factors that could inform the meaning-making processes of the participants. The reflections and interview transcripts gave insight into their perceptions and descriptions of their lived experiences of listening to music.

Within-case Analysis

A within-case analysis was conducted once the researchers had familiarised themselves with the data. At this level of analysis, the individual participants' lived experiences of listening to the music were explored. This level of analysis is at an individual level to explore the unique character of each participant's lived experiences (Taylor, 2015).

1.Extracting Meaning. In IPA, the process of extracting meaning is not the same type of coding done in a thematic analysis, but rather an initial interpretation and a summary of the words directly used by the participants as they relate to the research questions (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008, Williamon et al., 2021). This was done for participant I (see Appendix N), as he indicated in his demographic questionnaire that he listens to music for 5-6 hours a day and he also reflected on experiences of listening to music that occurred at the time of being contacted and before. Participant I confirmed in his interview that listening to music has been an activity he has engaged in throughout his life. As listening to music was an activity he has done for most of his life, he was able to comment on how his relationship with music had changed generally and the specific experiences of listening to music. As a male participant, participant I presented novel perceptions and descriptions of his lived experiences of listening to music that contradicted and, at times, were similar to those presented by the majority of the female participants.

Provisional themes and subordinate themes were generated for participant I in the form of a case summary in which the researcher wrote down their insights and interpretations of Moshe's general and specific experiences of listening to music.

2.Connecting Themes. Once the themes had been established for participant I, these themes were organised into clusters that brought together themes that were connected in some way. These clusters were labelled to form subordinate themes and tabulated (see Table 1).

3.New participants. The themes from participant I's case were used to inform the analysis of the other participants, and subordinate themes were tabulated for all the participants (see Appendix L).

Cross-case Analysis

A cross-case analysis is a level of analysis in which final themes are constructed that reflect the meaning-making processes of most of the participants (Taylor, 2015). This level of analysis was done on a group level to reflect how the majority of the participants perceived and thought about their experiences of listening to music.

The Presentation of the Final Themes. The subordinate themes from all the participants were used to form a group of subordinate themes representing the entire sample's meaning-making process.

Trustworthiness and Rigour

Using several strategies, the researcher followed existing recommendations for enhancing rigour (Levitt et al., 2017). The researcher reviewed existing studies done on music to understand what existing research has found about the role of music and the psychological and emotional benefits that listening to music can have. The researcher read both recent and seminal literature to achieve this understanding. The research that was reviewed was quantitative and qualitative to ensure an expansive and varied understanding of the topics under study (Durach et al., 2017; Palani et al., 2023), namely music and emotional regulation.

As per the suggestion of existing literature (Fossey et al., 2002), the researcher considered if their overarching methodological approach was appropriate to elicit detailed and novel accounts from the participants that could allow for the exploration of their perceptions surrounding music and the role of music in their lives. Also, to determine if the sample would be able to address the research question and if the approach would be able to fully explore the context of the participants.

The researcher practised reflective writing to facilitate reflexivity and ensure that the assumptions regarding music and the participants did not compromise the accuracy of the data analysis or interpretation. Moreover, in the reflexive writing, the researcher engaged in a reflection on the research process as a whole. This reflection was apparent and commented on in the individual cases written about participants.

Ethics

The study was low risk. The participants reflected on their emotions, which might have evoked slight discomfort but not enough to necessitate a referral for the participants. As the researcher sourced participants from the University of the Witwatersrand and conducted interviews on the campus, permission was obtained from the Registrar of the University of the Witwatersrand and relevant HOS and HODs before sourcing participants (see Appendix F). Ethical approval was obtained from HREC (non-medical). Before starting their interviews, the participants were briefed on issues surrounding data storage, the recording of interviews, withdrawal from the study, and the presentation of the findings in a research report.

In accordance with existing recommendations (Husband, 2020), raw data such as the audio recordings of the interviews should be transcribed accurately to reflect the experiences of the participants, anonymised (by using pseudonyms) and stored securely. In this study, the researcher stored the interview transcripts and reflective questionnaire responses on a password-protected computer to which nobody other than the researcher and their supervisor had access. Participants in the study were explicitly told that anonymised versions of the semi-structured interviews as well as the reflective questionnaire responses would be stored on a password-protected accessible only to the researcher and the supervisor, and would be made available to others following a gate-keeping process including gaining formal clearance. The anonymised transcripts therefore cannot be appear as part of the report Which

will be made publicly available through The University of the Witwatersrand (including online through the University ETD repository). If the participants had any questions or queries, they were provided with the details of the researcher, HREC (non-medical) and the research supervisor. During the debriefing part of the interview, the participants were able to speak about their experience of engaging in the interview process and could add any information to their responses. Should the participants want to receive a copy of the manuscript, they were informed that they could request a summary of the results from the researcher.

Participants were informed that their transcripts and reflective pieces would be anonymised should the research findings be published or used in future studies. However, the researcher in question must obtain ethical approval to use the secondary data. The anonymised data was presented in this research report. Although the researcher had access to the identifying information provided for the duration of the data collection process to contact the participants and connect their questionnaire responses, these responses were permanently deleted from the SurveyMonkey platform. The identifying information was not disclosed by the researcher and was removed from the reflective questionnaire responses to generate anonymous versions of the data.

CHAPTER 4

Results

Bracketing and Reflexivity of the Full Research Process

Before the researcher could engage in the research process, the researcher engaged in bracketing and reflexivity related to their own experiences as well as the research process. The researcher understands a qualitative approach to research to require their interpretations of the results to be continuously refined. This continuous refinement did challenge the researcher to re-read existing studies that have researched emotional regulation and musical experiences for the purpose of establishing a general methodological approach that could address the outlined research questions. Interviewing the participants required skills such as communication skills as well as interpersonal skills to be able to establish a rapport with the participants. Ensuring that the names of the IPA themes encapsulated what the researcher had noticed in the findings proved to be difficult, but was achieved through the constant engagement with the original interview transcripts.,

The Context of the Participants

Before collecting data, the researcher engaged in reflexivity and bracketing surrounding musical concepts, concepts surrounding emotions and their own experiences (see Appendix L). This was done to ensure that the researcher's biases did not significantly influence the interpretations of the participants' contexts and perspectives.

Listening to music is something that participant I has experienced at different stages of his life, and his desire to listen to music has become "increasingly more obsessive" (Participant I) as he has gotten older. Participant I finds music to be abstract and "really flowy" (Participant I), and in this way, experiences of listening to music have "balances out logic" (Participant I). Participant I stated that listening to music can be a "portal" (Participant I) to meaningful memories in his childhood, which he finds enjoyable.

Participant A's lived experiences of listening to music are predominately social in nature and have a cultural and spiritual dimension in his home, as listening to music allows him to focus on his "spiritual well-being" (Participant A). Participant A makes meaning of music through the spiritual role that listening to music has played in his life.

Participant F is a male participant whose experiences of listening to music are meaningful when they reflect aspects of his identity as well as his preferences. Music for participant F reflects who he is "versus what (he) like(s)" (Participant F).

Participant E experiences of listening to music are associated with her family's diverse cultural background. Her experiences of listening to music make her "feel close to both sides of (her) family" (Participant E) and "closer to (her) culture" (Participant E).

Participant B often listens to music when she is doing academic work. Experiences of listening to music that inspire Avery to write and be less "blocked" (Participant B) or "frustrated" (Participant B) are meaningful to her. Feeling blocked and frustrated often happens when participant B struggles to work on academic tasks. Participant B works and studies, listening to music more when completing academic tasks than when working.

Participant H, like participant B, works and studies. Unlike participant B, participant H's most meaningful experiences of listening to music are more associated with her professional identity than her identity as a Master's student, as she listens to music on her commute to and from work. When she works from home, she wants "there to be quiet" (Participant H).

Participant G does not work and is a full time Master's student. Participant G lives away from her parents in a student accommodation, which is typically a noisy environment. Listening to music helps participant G to "clear the noise out" (Participant G) and remain focused. Moreover, Participant G is in her thirties and is trying to focus on her professional

and career development. Listening to music that helps her to stay motivated and focus on her professional goals is meaningful to her.

Participant J is also a full-time undergraduate student who lives away from home. Participant J finds experiences of listening to music meaningful when they allow her to focus on mundane tasks such as house chores. Participant J indicated in her interview that she also grew up in a household where listening to music was encouraged. Music is meaningful to Participant J, and she was raised to think about the value and meaning that listening to music can have in her life.

Participant K is an Honour's student. She experienced that listening to music during different stages of her life enabled her to make meaning of these experiences in different ways throughout her life. Participant K is also on campus frequently due to her tutoring role and finds campus an overstimulating environment where she can listen to music to meaningfully regulate her emotions.

Participant L is a student who is learning to cope with academic stress and demands. Listening to music is meaningful when she can find music that she enjoys and is open to the music that she is listening to.

Participant C is a student with musical training that has resulted in her appreciating how meaningful experiences of listening to music can be. Moreover, participant C's family also has musical training, so listening to music was encouraged in participant C's familial context, which she often engages in with members of her family.

Participant D also has musical training that could potentially inform how she makes meaning of listening to music. Her choice of study has informed her desire to understand how listening to music meaningfully impacts her emotions.

Extracting Meaning and Generating Themes

Once the data had been collected and before analysing it, the researcher noted general trends in the data (Appendix M). Once the researcher understood the general trends in the data, they were able to being able to extract meaning and generate themes for participant I's case. The researcher wrote an individual summary of participant I's case. In this summary, the researcher summarised participant I's context and the initial ideas and quotes from participant I's reflections and interview that initially stood out as representative of his meaning-making process. The researcher re-read the interview transcript and reflection, extracted meaning and generated themes for participant I (see Table 2).

Participant I

Participant I is a twenty-four-year-old Sotho-speaking male who loves listening to hip-hop, Jazz, R&B, Blues and Soul music. Participant I indicated in his questionnaire that he has no musical training but listens to music daily for 5-6 hours. Participant I also indicated listening to music to relax, get in a good mood, and block out sound. Participant reflected on a recent experience of listening to music when he completed the reflective survey for the first two times. In his third reflection, he reflected on an experience of listening to music that occurred when he was contacted. Participant I's first reflection was written between one hour to one hour and 59 minutes after being contacted, and the other two reflections were written after four hours of being contacted. Participant I said that it is "a weird time to be a participant in any study" as his "coursework tends to ramp up" in the second semester. Before the study, participant I said that before participating in the study, he would "usually just listen to music" without "actually thinking about what (he is) listening to". This alludes to the fact that although academic demands might be a factor preventing participant I from reflecting on how music impacts him, it does enhance his insight into the emotions that he feels while

listening to music. Participant I expressed that he "did enjoy reflecting" on what he was listening to.

Music as Escapism. Participant I expressed that listening to music can help to remember childhood memories. Participant I explained: "Music feels like a portal back into your childhood or a time when you had no responsibilities when music was the only thing that exists" . Participant I's use of music as escapism was something that he described to be foregrounded by his father. Participant I added in his reflection that his father made "every special moment in (his) childhood connect to music in some way" . This shows that music can link to participant I's emotions through its ability to link with memories in participant I's childhood that are "unbelievably positive". These memories are very likely associated with desirable emotions. Participant I equating music to a "portal" links to his belief that music is not something people use to stay present in their lives. Participant I's experience of linking listening to music to positive emotions is significant, as it alludes to the fact that participant might cope with his emotions by distracting himself and ruminating on past desirable emotions.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music. Participant I stated that his relationship with listening to music has changed throughout his life. He expressed that getting a good quality pair of headphones has meant that he listens to music a lot more than in the past. He mentioned: "The closer I got to university, the more resources I had to elevate my experience. When I got an expensive pair of earphones, things just skyrocketed. It has gotten increasingly more obsessive" . He expressed this in one of his reflections in which he stated that not having good equipment to listen music on feels like "robbery". In his reflections, participant I demonstrated that he is someone who appreciates when a rhythm or beat is unique. Good quality equipment might help him to hear beats and rhythms and be emotionally moved by them.

Music as Being Creative and Abstract. Participant I expressed that he believed that creating and listening to music are creative activities and that listening to music is something people choose to do. Participant I expressed that the creativity of listening to music contrasts with the logical nature of other activities. Participant I stated: “I feel like creativity is a necessity in the way that it balances out logic” and that there “are very concrete ways of dealing with things” and there is a way that music can be “enigmatic” and “really flowy” . Participant I, being a student and particularly a student who was raised by a father who encouraged him to appreciate literature, could explain why he appreciates when musicians thoughtfully use words artistically. He is also able to access music on free platforms, so he can listen to music even though he does not work and studies full-time. Before his interview, Participant I mentioned being enrolled for a Master’s degree, conducting research based on statistical analysis. The enigmatic, indirect and creative nature of listening to music may contrast with the factual, objective, mathematical nature of statistics that participant I himself is busy with.

Participant I indicated that music is the most accessible abstract and creative art form. He expressed: “It’s on the same side as paintings and poetry, but I feel like it is one of the most accessible ones. When reading poetry, you need to be a deep fan, and reading books takes time”. Participant I understands how committed one needs to be to understand poetry and reading, which he learned through his father who “is a very literary person”, who “emphasised thinking about things in a certain way” . Participant I’s upbringing and familial context influenced his appreciation of creative activities such as listening to music and poetry.

Listening to music being obsessive. Participant I expressed that he feels that music is something people feel compelled to do. Participant I stated: “When it comes to life, it mostly pertains to things that we have to do, and music is one of the few things in life that you choose to do. It feels like a choice. It feels like a necessity. There are compulsory things that

you have to do in life, and music is one of the few things that people want to do". There is a distinction between the activities that participant I feels he must do, like chores, and listening to music, which is an activity that is very enjoyable but not an activity he is obligated to partake in. participant autonomously decides to listen to music, and the enjoyment of listening to music makes him feel compelled to continue doing so. This distinction is noteworthy, as it possibly alludes to the fact that autonomously choosing to listen to music adds to the significance and meaning of the experience. The finding is also interesting as alludes to the fact that there is potential for listening to music to such a compelling activity to engage in that it almost does not feel as though it is an autonomous activity. In this way, listening to music can possibly feel both like a compelling and autonomous activity.

Participant I also expressed that he believes that listening to music can be something that he engages in so frequently that it feels like obsessive activity that results in him often thinking about music. Participant I explained: "There is something that I have noticed. When I listen to it and need it to elevate me, it always lets me down". Participant I's reliance on listening to music to elevate his emotions results in him being disappointed in the experience. Participant I added that he is always trying to feel emotionally "neutral" so that listening to music does "elevate" him and his emotions. Moshe also expressed that unusual aspects of the songs he listens to stand out and allow him to recall the music almost unconsciously. The addictive nature of listening to music was possibly evident in one of participant I's reflections in which he said that the unusual "voice pitch" adopted by artists is something that made him think about a particular song "for days" as it was "stuck in (his) head".

Music changing the valence and intensity of emotions. Participant I expressed that although listening to music does intensify his emotions, he must be conscious of this when it is happening. This idea contradicts participant I's sentiment that listening to music does not impact his emotions when he is overly reliant on it to do so. There is perhaps a degree to

which an awareness of the impact of listening is beneficial, but being overly reliant on it is not. Participant I mentioned: “There is something that music elevates, and when I pay attention to it, it makes it more intense” . Participant I also expressed that listening to music can distract him from negative emotions . Participant I described: “There have been moments where I finish listening to songs and have completely forgotten why or how bad I felt before. I have not always been actively conscious enough when that has happened, but there have been moments where I have sat and have forgotten what I felt bad or negative about. When I stop listening to music, I remember what it is and am just shocked by the fact that I could completely forget”. Participant I further expressed that he listens to music when he desires to feel a positive emotion. Participant I stated: “Listening to music can totally shift a negative emotion to a positive one or emotions in a different direction”.

Music for Coping. Participant I stated that he believes listening to music has helped him identify and cope with emotions of stress or overwhelm and cope with them. Participant I also uses music when he feels demotivated. Participant I said: “I don’t know how many times music has helped me to cope when I don’t feel like working or getting out of bed”. Participant’s emphasis on experiences of listening to music being related to positive emotions is interesting. He did not seem open to the idea that some individuals might choose to listen to sadder or darker music. The focus he has on positive emotions might be informed by his previous experiences of listening to music. Participant I said that although he does feel that listening to music can facilitate coping in times of stress, due to the difficult nature of the tasks that cause him stress as a postgraduate student, he finds that he has to utilise it more consciously than in the past. Participant I said: “I haven’t used music to get me in a flow state in a while, but it was easy in first- and second-year. Tasks just felt easier. If I listen to music and it mediates the mood that I’m in and the emotions I feel, it lets me study. It doesn’t let me

get out of a productive cycle that I am in in terms of the work that I am studying. It used to help me a lot in the past. It now still helps, but it needs to be a conscious thing".

Participant I described that listening to music does not provide specific solutions to problems but can sometimes reflect the situations he is in and facets of his identity. Participant I mentioned: "I suppose the artists who sing the songs that I listen to are not really the smartest people. My dad always mentions that R&B is the worst music form ever. It is just about love and how love can have the power to shift mountains. It does not always make sense. I don't think that the music genre [R&B] I listen to caters for that. It does make you understand certain things. There are some things that are said in music that are really ridiculous but have a parallel with reality. It does reflect life to a certain extent, but the accuracy with which it does so depends on what I am listening to". Participant I's desire to feel his life situations and his identity reflected in the music that he listens to is understandable due to the extent to which he thinks about patterns and themes that he observes when analysing research results.

Connecting Themes

Themes in participant I's case were developed through subordinate themes being clustered (see Table 2).

Table 1:

The final themes and subordinate themes of participant I

THEME 1: THE EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1. Change in the experiences of listening to music	1."The closer I got to university, the more resources I had to elevate my experience. When I got an expensive pair of earphones, things just skyrocketed. It has gotten increasingly more obsessive".
2. Music as being abstract and creative	2."I feel like creativity is a necessity in the way that it balances out logic".
3. Listening to music being obsessive	3."When it comes to life, it mostly pertains to things that we have to do, and music is one of the few things in life that you choose to do. It

4. Music changing the valence and intensity of emotions	feels like a choice. It feels like a necessity. There are compulsory things that you have to do in life, and music is one of the few things that people want to do". 4."There is something that music elevates, and when I pay attention to it, it makes it more intense"
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1. Music for coping 2. Music as escapism	1."I don't know how many times music has helped me to cope when I don't feel like working or getting out of bed" 2. "Music feels like a portal back into your childhood or a time when you had no responsibilities when music was the only thing that exists" .

New participants

Once participant's case had been analysed, the themes and subordinate themes were used to inform the analysis of the other participants (See Appendix N). See below extracts from the case of subordinate themes that emerged from the other participants that were different from the ones that emerged from the analysis of participant I's case. In some instances, subordinate themes were refined, expanded on, rephrased or changed.

The Universal Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant A expressed his belief that music is societally meaningful, culturally significant and is universal in nature. Participant A said: "I think that music is not just music. It is rooted somewhere. There is a cultural aspect. It helps us to connect with our spiritual wellbeing and music is a collective thing that brings people together". "Music makes people share the same sentiment at some point in life. I think that your attitude about music goes with your mood at a certain point. On Sundays you may play Gospel music. In the afternoons, when I'm preparing my dinner, I will play RnB. For me, music goes with a context in time" (Participant A). Participant A feels that music can bring individuals from different cultures together and

serve a religious function. Listening to music allows people to understand each other and experience the same emotions.

The Somatic Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant A expressed that during the specific experiences of listening to music that he reflected on, what was significant was the sensation he felt in his body when he listened to music. Participant A explained: “I remember that I was once tired because I had a long day and whilst I was playing music, I could feel a physical sensation in my body. I tried to regroup myself. My mind could restart and focus on things like never before”. As someone who studies Psychology level who is used to focusing on academic tasks, participant A is likely to know what his body feels like when he is not motivated or focused in contrast to when he is focused and alert.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant A alluded to the fact that listening to music can distract from the “stress” or “bad emotions” that he might be feeling. Before his interview, participant A stated that he feels that the stress of having to consistently study and adhere to deadlines can be stressful, and that music can be a means for him to distract himself from the stress.

Music for Entertainment

Participant C expressed her belief that music is something that can be listened to different situations and can be a way to mitigate boredom and be a source of entertainment . Participant C stated: “If I cannot take out my phone or read something, listening to music gives me something to do” . As participant C is a student, she must commute from her accommodation to campus. As music is easily accessible, and something that she can easily rely on for entertainment as she was raised to do by her parents and sibling who are musically inclined.

Music Genres Being an Important Aspect of Musical Experiences

Participant C explained that different genres of music can have an emotional impact on people that can be anticipated or unanticipated. Participant C said: “People should appreciate more types of music. Many people just listen to one genre. I experience a whole spectrum of emotions. Different genres help for different things. Sometimes, even things that you would not expect”. Participant C believes that impact of music is diverse and that is important to listen to different genres to experience the different impacts of music. Participant C not only expressed that she has musical training, but also that her parents appreciate music. These contextual factors might explain why participant C appreciates and understands the diverse emotional impact listening to music can have on people.

Negative Musical Messaging

Participant C stated that she believes that although listening to music “has generally been positive” and that listening to music is something that she “enjoy(s) personally”, doing in her “family context and with friends” but that she just finds it negative when the lyrics that she listens to do not coincide with her Christian values. Participant C said: “I don’t want to hear the swear words and negative things that they speak about in music. It really aggravates me and just grosses me out completely. At times, it is hard to get away from”. Participant C in this way uses music not only to affirm the values that she already has, but understand the things and musical messaging that does not correspond or coincide with these values.

Music for Entertainment During Times of Demotivation

Participant C expressed that she finds that music can help her to concentrate and “focus on the single thing” when she is struggling to focus and needs entertainment to make mundane tasks “more fun” when she is feeling unmotivated and “not feeling” like doing things like “house chores” . Participant C expressed that she specifically listening to classical music to focus. Participant C said that she can put a classical musical track on and feel

"motivated to do work". Music has the ability to provide a source of entertainment when feeling unmotivated.

The Predictable Nature of Listening to Music

Participant D said that she was aware of how routine listening to music is in her life. Participant D said: "In the past, I would listen to music based on my moods or what I needed in a moment. It was second nature to do that… I was more aware of the fact that there was a routine to how I listen to genre". What participant D expects music to facilitate is dependent on how she feels whilst she is listening to it. Participant D's experiences of listening to music are predictable and routine. This could be explained by participants E's appreciation of music generally.

The Cultural Aspect of Music

Participant E stated that listening to music has been culturally specific in her context. Lesley said: "I grew up in a mixed household with different cultures. Music has always allowed me to feel close to both sides of my family and feel closer to my culture. It's drawn me back to my roots, the principles that I was raised with. I associate music with a lot of things in my life". Participant E stated before her interview that she has had to do things to remind her of the principles she was raised on. This is before Participant E is living away from her childhood home and independently for the first time.

Music Being Distracting

Participant E did reflect that one of the experiences of listening to music was not positive as it was "disrupting (her) relaxed state of mind". Participant E does not just perceive listening to music to just be positive. She described that she finds that music can distract her.

Listening to Music with Other Creative Activities

Participant F stated his belief that listening to music can be linked or associated with other forms of creative expressions such as singing and dancing. Participant F expressed: "I

love to sing along even though I cannot sing to save my life" and "If you want to dance like nobody is looking, there is a type of music that you listen to, and it makes a difference". Before the commencement of the interview, participant F described that he was also encouraged in his family context to engage in creative forms of expression such as dancing and singing despite not having formal training to do so. Participant F also indicated that he is generally a sociable and extroverted individual and could possibly explain his confidence to accompany listening to music with other creative expressions like singing and dancing.

The Negative Aspects of Listening to Music

Participant F expressed that one of the things that irritates him about listening to music is when he is unable to listen to music played by his favourite bands due to them playing music too late at night . Liam said: "The only thing that irritates me about that is that I follow a lot of the artists, and they don't do day shows. I would really love day shows because I don't like to be out at three or four in the morning listening to music" . Before his interview, participant F expressed that he is a busy student and must study during the evenings. This could explain why he does not enjoy listening to music late at night.

Participant F stated that he rarely has negative experiences of listening to music. Listening to music needs to meet certain expectations to be meaningful. Participant F explained: "I've never really had a negative experience of listening to music unless I'm listening to an artist's new song and it's not as banging as it should be".

The Social Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant F also said that he feels as though experiences of listening to music are personal. Participant F said: "For me, it's hard to explain. It's this sense of euphoria. Even though you are on the dancefloor with friends, you just feel this connection with the sounds, the vibrations, the speakers. You have this connection with the DJ. You feel like they are playing for you". As Liam mentioned before his interview that he believes that music is

social, it is understandable that he also believes that experiences of listening to music are personal and social.

Musical Messaging

Participant G expressed that she believes that music has the potential to positively influence people's lives, and that people can be "positively enhanced through listening to music".

Participant G described that she believes that it is important for music to have a "positive message behind it" for listening to music to play a positive role in her life. The use of the words "positively" and "positive" demonstrates that participant G does not want to listening to music to have a negative emotional impact on her.

Participant G expressed that she likes to music "before (she) sleep(s)" (Participant G) and after "a hectic day" as a way to calm her down. This demonstrates that Mavis listens to music to experience desirable emotions. When music has a positive message, it allows participant G to feel positive generally.

Experiences of music being enhanced through openness: Participant G described that she believes that experiences of listening to music can be linked to emotions if one is able to "open (themselves) up to the experience" and that it can be "amazing" to listen to music if one does so. Listening to music impacting emotions is something that participant G believes can occur if the people listening to the music are open to the experience. People need to be convinced

Music That Evokes Sadness Being Unappealing

Participant G actively avoids listening to music that is negative or sad which is why her experiences of listening to music have been predominantly positive "because the music that (she) listen(s) to is positively based". In a reflection, participant G said that the only way in which listening to music would be a negative experience would be if it "evoke(d) sadness"

that she did not want to experience. This demonstrates that participant G does not desire to experience emotions that make her feel negative. This aversion to experiencing negative emotions could be explained by events that have happened in participant G's' past.

The Emotional Impact of Listening to Music Being Dependent on the listener's Emotional Baseline

Participant H said that she believes that the impact that music has on her can depend on the mood that she is already before listening to music. Participant H explained: "For me, it depends on my mood. It can lift my mood and zone out of a situation. If I've had a bad day at work, it can help me to zone out and go to a better place. It is like a mood regulator for me. It depends". Participant H stated before her interview that she works and studies Psychology. It is understandable that she believes that music is contextual as she has likely listened to music in different contexts.

Musical Preferences being Familial

Participant H also expressed that different people have influenced her musical preferences. Participant H expressed: "I grew up listening to talk radio and jazz because that is what my dad listened to. Listening to new music was influenced by my cousin of mine". Participant H stated before her interview that she comes from a family that is very close, so it is understandable that her musical preferences were influenced by her family members.

The Predictable Nature of Listening to Music

Participant H expressed that she believes that she keeps all her experiences of listening to music similar to each other. Participant H expressed: "I can link all of it back to what he listened to. I'm not very experimental. There are people who listen to different genres. I generally listen to the same things over and over again". This indicates that participant H enjoys music that is familiar to her. In her interview, Mika said that is "always a

good thing" when you "get to choose what you listen to" (K8: 7). Mika is autonomous in her decision to listen to new music.

Participant H described that the only times that she listened to new music was when people have recommended new songs to her. Participant H said: "I recently added something to my playlist because I was driving with someone. I thought that it was not too bad. It popped up in my Spotify". Participant H said that had it not been for the recommendation, she "would not have gone and actively looked for something different" and enjoys listening to the "same songs" . Mika expressed during her interview that she trusts her friends. It is understandable that she would trust the musical preferences of her friends.

Music as Accompanying Social Events

Participant H expressed that she does not listen to music to recall memories or times in her life as she is sociable and more inclined to talk to the people around her when she listening to music. Participant H said: "I do not really use music to reminisce or think back. I'm generally a talkative person. If I'm around other people and there is music playing, I would not really remember the song. I am more of a social butterfly". Participant H stated before her interview that she was encouraged by her father to be social, so she is so engaged in social interactions that she does not remember music playing in the background of social interactions.

Presentation of Final Themes and Subthemes

The final themes reflect prominent and contrasting ideas that address the research objectives and the meaning-making processes of the participants (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). The phrasing of the final subordinate themes were liable to being changed as the researcher refined them.

Theme 1: Experiences of Listening to Music Being Meaningful When Powerful

In this theme, the significant or powerful aspects of the experiences of listening to music were discussed. Although some of the powerful aspects of listening to music might linked to the functions of listening to music, these functions were specific functions that stood out to the participants and made their experiences of listening to music significant or meaninful . Listening to music was framed to be an activity engaged in universally by the members of most societies and a shared experience.

Listening to Music Being Powerful When Social and Universal. In this subordinate theme, the participants described how music can be a powerful entity that allows people from different cultures and in different contexts to feel similar sentiments and emotions prevalent in most cultural contexts.

Participant E described that she experiences listening to music to being powerful and meaningful when it a universal “common denominator” (Participant E) in “a society that is very negative” (Participant E). This is reinforced by participant A, who said that “(m)usic makes people share the same sentiment at some point in life” (Participant A) . Additionally, participants described that listening to music has always been powerful in its significance and prevalence in their lives. Participant F expressed that “(m)usic plays a big role” (Participant F) in his life and “is a tool in (participant B’s) personal toolkit” (Participant B). Participant G expressed having that same belief that music is “one positive tool” (Participant G). These are not unexpected sentiments to be held by participants in a diverse South African context. Although South Africans belong to different cultures, these cultures are all associated with a specific type of music. Listening to music has cultural significance (Singh & Mehr, 2023). This is especially true in a South African context in which the population is comprised of people of many different cultures (Getz et al., 2012). In an existing study that explored the

cultural, religious and social functions of music, it was culturally significant in so far as it created a sense of social cohesion and belongingness specifically to an ethnic group or place (Lebaka, 2019). This function was observed due to music being an important tool of communication and integral to ceremonies such as initiation and coronations in African communities (Lebaka, 2019). Participant B is a participant who specifically mentioned the meaning that music can have in cultural ceremonies and participant E expressed that she felt music connected her to her cultural heritage.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music. Participants described that their experiences of listening to music changed throughout their lives and have been meaningful in different ways. Participants B, K, and I described how their musical preferences have changed throughout their lives. Participant B mentioned: " It has waxed and waned in terms of the genres that I listen to. I started off listening to a lot more rock and now listen to progressive house. These are starkly different genres" (Participant B). These use of the "starkly" (Participant B) demonstrates that participant B can notice a significant difference in her experiences of listening to music. Participant K described: "Some people can listen to the same artist all the time, but my music taste and experiences change every two years" (Participant K). Like participants B and K, participant I has progressively learnt to appreciate Jazz more than in the past. Participant I described: "My dad was a big Jazz fan. As a kid, Jazz made no sense to me. Listening to Jazz now makes me feel like I'm in two places at the same time. I'm listening to it as an adult and a kid" (Participant I). Musical preferences and genres can be linked to each other (Gardikiotis & Baltzis, 2012). Musical preference structures include listening (Classical, Jazz, Country), pop/dance (Techno and Soul), and heavy rock (Heavy Metal, Rock and Punk) (Gardikiotis & Baltzis, 2012). Participants G and F described listening to music as meaningful in different ways throughout their lives. Participant G said: " The emotional impact that listening to music has definitely been

different from the past. I have chosen to dwell in different music. Back in the day, I would listen to Gospel, which tends to intensify most of our emotions. I will cry and think of my problems. At this point, I'm a happy soul and just trying to remain positive and inspired" (Participant G). Participant G's experiences of listening to music reflect an overarching shift in her overall well-being and outlook on life. Participant G expressed that she is a generally more optimistic and positive person and wants this state to be maintained by music rather than being focused on her problems or struggles. Participant F said that his experiences of listening to music have been more a reflection of his identity in the past. Participant F said: "When I would listen to music as a child, there was nothing to it. When I got older and was in high school, the type of music that I would listen to defined me as a person. It was this rock and grunge person to show that I was this deep and dark person. That just changed into the more Afrikaans music where I could embrace the aspect of me that is Afrikaans and enjoying the Afrikaans music. It became a matter of music reflecting who I am versus what I like" (Participant F). Listening to music became meaningful in its ability to reflect identity for participant F. This is not surprising, given that he was forming his identity during this developmental stage. Musical preferences can be linked to identity and social acceptance (Gardikiotis & Baltzis, 2012; Upadhaya et al., 2017). It is possible that as participant F has gained more of an understanding of his identity and an interest in his Afrikaans heritage, he wants music to meaningfully reflect who he is as a person rather than just listening to music to be part of a peer group. In an existing study that explored the link between collective self-esteem and musical preference, it was found that young adults' with low group membership are likely to be attracted to more oppositional styles of music such as hard rock, heavy metal or punk (Clarke & Lonsdale, 2023). It is possible that because participant C feels that his Afrikaans heritage has been accepted by his friends, that he is more inclined to be comfortable with that aspect of his identity and others so has the desire to listen to music that

reflects who he is rather than listen to music to fit into a social or peer group. Some participants described listening to and using music more than in the past. Participant C said: "I need to listen to music more. University is rough, and I am a long way from home. That adds extra stress. I have to care for myself completely. I still have support, but it is harder, and I know tend to use music more to reassure me and calm me. It is the same as the past but intensified" (Participant C). Participant I expressed listening to music more than in the past. Participant I said: "When I got an expensive pair of earphones, things just skyrocketed. It has gotten increasingly more obsessive" (Participant I). Unlike the other participants, participants H and L described that their music-listening experiences have been similar and universal. The context of the participants, being students who need to cope with personal and academic demands and their expectation that music will serve a meaningful function in their lives, might have informed the fact that they have had more experience listening to music than in the past.

Emotions are affective states associated with a particular context in which they are felt and linked with valence and intensity (Gross, 2015). The valence of an emotion is the nature of the emotion in question to which an emotion is perceived to be negative or positive (Barrett, 2006; Gross, 2015). Emotional intensity is the degree to which an emotion is felt (Bachorowski & Braaten, 1994; Gross, 2015). In this study, emotional awareness, changes in emotional valence and changes in emotional intensity were aspects of the experiences of listening to music that the participants commented on in their specific and general experiences of listening to music. In an existing study that evaluated musical stimuli in terms of emotional valence, it was shown that 19 congruent valence stimuli (fast paced and positively valanced music) and 16 incongruent stimuli (slow paced and negatively valanced music (Hofbauer & Rodriguez, 2023). These findings were also observed in the study, as

participants described that fast paced music and music with positive messaging resulted in them experiencing positive emotions.

Music Changing Emotional Intensity. During a specific experience of listening to music, participant A stated that he finds that music "maintains balance in anything" (Participant A); he prevents his negative emotions from feeling "overwhelming" (Participant A). Experiences of listening to music can enhance the intensity of positive emotions to prevent the intensity of negative emotions from being overwhelming. Participant B expressed a similar sentiment when she said that listening to music is something that "elevates (her) emotions" (Participant B) . During a specific experience of listening to music, participant C commented that listening to music helped her "to calm down and stay away from a panic attack" (Participant C). This demonstrates that listening to music can decrease the intensity of emotions such as anxiety. Participant E stated that listening to music enhances the intensity of negative emotions. Participant E said: " If I am feeling that I am in an emotional space, and I want music to reflect what I am feeling, music can amplify that" (Participant E). Interestingly, both participants F and K described enjoying the experience of listening to music as amplifying negative emotions. Participant F said: "There are certain artists and songs that make you feel sad. You sometimes crave a good cry" (Participant F). Sally expressed a similar idea: "In some ways, listen to sad music when I feel sad instead of trying to change it helps more" (Participant K). Accentuated rhythms are associated with a change in emotional intensity, so the structure of the music that the participants listened to could explain their change in emotional intensity (Baumgartner et al., 2006). This is expected as the participants indicated that they are listening to music genres such as house, techno, and R&B, which are characterised by rhythm. In an existing study that explored musical listening, emotional recognition and intensity, it was found that the length of time listened to music resulted in the possibility of more intense emotions experienced (Grace et al., 2019). This

could perhaps be the reason that participant I described listening to music that he enjoyed in an obsessive manner or why participant C has listened to music more than before as she desires to feel emotions of comfort more intensely than when she was living at home.

Music changing emotional valence. In a student context, anxiety was the prominent negative emotion that had a chance in valence when music was listened to. Participant E said: "If I am in a situation in which I am overwhelmed or stressed, the type of music I listen to will calm down my emotion" (Participant E). Participant E stated that she feels listening to music can sometimes make her maintain the valence of her positive emotions. Participant Lstated: "I think that it's a way to maintain my emotions. To sit with my feelings. If I'm happy, it helps to maintain that feeling" (Participant E). Ego-resilience is a determinant of a person's ability to tolerate undesirable emotions and maintain desirable ones and is characterised by curiosity, creativity, self-efficacy and the ability to endure and recover from difficult events (Kashdan & Rottenberg, 2010). The student sample demonstrated high levels of ego-resilience in their context of having to problem solve and demonstrate creativity in their studies to tolerate and cope with undesirable emotions but actively look for ways to cope, such as listening to music when they are unable to cope. This ego-resilience was described by the participants who demonstrated being creative in their strategies to manage studying in noisy environments and ways of managing their anxiety before writing exams or tests. In an existing study that explored if listening to classical music before an exam could decrease anxiety before exams, it was found that it was an effective method to do so (Yuspitasari et al., 2020)

Theme 2: The Meaningful Functions of Listening to Music

This theme emerged as participants discussed what they believe listening to music does for them. The participants described that listening to music can have a religious function,

facilitate concentration, be a source of entertainment, facilitate the recollection of memories, and facilitate emotional regulation and coping.

The Religious Function of Listening to Music. Participants A, H, L and C all described music as having a religious and culturally specific meaning in their lives. Participant A believes that music can allow people to "connect with (their) spiritual well-being" (Participant A). Existing research has shown that spiritual well-being has enhanced life satisfaction (Smith et al., 2013). Participant A's belief in using music for this function might be explained by his upbringing in a culture and family in which spiritual well-being was prioritised. In one of her reflections, participant H also wrote that listening to music allowed her to focus on "God's holiness and the importance of focusing on Him" (Participant H). This was also expressed in participant H's interview when she was asked. Finally, participant C expressed that she listens to "worship music to cement my faith and what (she) know(s)" (Participant C). Chloe expressed a desire not to lose the values of the Christian religion she grew up with as she no longer lives with her parents and moved away from home to study. It is evident that maintaining or strengthening a religious identity can be a function of music, playing a meaningful role in people's lives. Participant L introduced a new idea of music as an effective way to focus people on having a spiritually significant experience. Participant L said: "In Christianity, music plays a huge role in setting the atmosphere to get into the Lord's presence in church and stuff like that. They play music first and then go into the service. It's just to like focus our minds on a higher power" (Participant L). It is not unexpected that listening to music has a religious function as there are many religions that exist in a South African context, and religious rituals and practices are associated with music. The students may find practising religion pleasant due to being raised in religious households and the sense of community often associated with being religious. In an existing study that explored the uses of religious music outside church settings, it was found that religious music

was listened to as background music whilst doing other tasks outside of church activities and facilitated other religious practices like prayer and bible reading (Tepera, 2018). This finding was confirmed by participants saying that they listened to gospel music frequently to enhance their overall religious devotion and reinforce their religious values outside church activities.

Listening to music for entertainment. In addition to having a religious function, listening to music can function as entertainment whilst doing mundane tasks. Participant B stated that she feels that listening to music is entertaining when she has to do chores around the house. Participants B and C are examples of participants who use music for this function. Participant B said: "When I am working and doing mundane tasks like packing the dishwasher I will usually pair those tasks with music. It just makes those experiences more enjoyable and incentivises me to get the task done" (Participant B). Participant c expressed a similar sentiment. She stated that music prevents her from experiencing boredom. "Sometimes, when I take the bus to campus, it keeps my mind from being bored. If I cannot take out my phone or read something, listening to music gives me something to do" (Participant C).

Music for emotional regulation. According to existing literature, emotional regulation can require avoiding certain people, places, or objects (Ford & Gross, 1998). Participant K avoids listening to music in public spaces that she knows will make her feel negative emotions, like on campus. Participant C described that she would listen to music with her family, and doing so would make her experience of listening to music more meaningful.

Emotional regulation requires changing a situation to change its emotional repercussions and requires individuals to understand the distressing aspects of a situation (Bucich & MacCann, 2019; Gross, 1998). Participant C demonstrated using this strategy of emotional regulation when she was on the verge of experiencing a panic attack and listening

to music changed the emotional repercussions of that stressful experience so that she did "not really reach the point of a panic or anxiety attack" (Participant C). Participant F is another example of this. Participant F listens to music before a test or exam to change the emotional repercussions of writing it. Participant F explained: "Before tests, if I am feeling stressed, I've got two go-to songs. They are (name of two songs removed). They just remind me not to be worried and be happy" (Participant F). The students are likely aware of their emotional states and what they expect listening to music to do to their mood due to their field of study teaching them an awareness of emotional vocabulary.

Focusing or distracting oneself from the emotional content of a situation can facilitate emotional regulation (Gross, 1998, 2015; Keltner & Gross, 1999). Participants described that listening to music can distract them from the noisiness of their environment or from negative emotions. Participant G said that she lives in a "noisy apartment" (Participant G) and she uses music to "clear out" (Participant G) the noise that she experiences around her. Additionally, participant A expressed that listening to music can allow him to be distracted from "bad emotions" (Participant A) and "stress" (Participant A) that he might be feeling. Ruminating on both positive emotions can facilitate emotional regulation. In her interview, participant K described that she finds it more beneficial and cathartic to think about her negative emotions than distract herself from them. In contrast, participant I described that he enjoys ruminating on desirable emotions. Before their interviews, some of the participants that live away from home described that they enjoyed the comfort that rumination can afford, as it often results in them thinking about pleasant memories.

Emotional regulation requires actively choosing the meaning attached to a situation and changing one's belief regarding one's capability to manage a situation or change its associated emotions (Gross, 1998; Massah et al., 2016). A significant example of this was found in how participant G described that music makes her feel as though she has the ability

to achieve her goals. Mavis said: “There is a type of music that just positively inspires my ambitions towards my business which I am yet to pursue” (Participant G). Tertiary students, especially those enrolled in postgraduate academic programmes, think about their professional development, with music functioning to enhance professional motivation not found as a surprising result.

In an existing study emotional regulation strategies and emotional regulation strategies were explored in individuals between the ages of 18-25 (Garrido et al., 2022) . Participants used a variety of strategies including selecting mood-matching music, mood-reducing music, or mood-incongruent music to manage antecedent states of depression, anxiety, and tiredness. Intervening factors that modulated the outcomes of these strategies included the severity of prior mood, features of the music, and individual capacity for using effective emotion-regulation strategies (Garrido et al., 2022). Most of these findings were confirmed by the participants of this study, but participants did not mention their general abilities to regulate their emotions more generally when not listening to music.

Music for coping. All the participants described that music can facilitate emotion-based coping. Emotion-based coping requires people to be aware of the impact of stress on their emotions. Only four participants described that song lyrics directly provide the solutions to stressful situations or problems.

Listening to music can facilitate coping by allowing participants to identify feelings of stress or apprehension but concentrate despite these emotions. Music only facilitates coping when doing specific types of stressful academic tasks. This was expressed by participant B, participant F, participant G, participant A, and participant I. Participant K explained that although music can help her to concentrate, it only does so in certain contexts, as it does for participant F. Participant K mentioned: “If it is something like writing study notes or adding

something to a slide that I have all my notes prepared or a quick quiz. Even when I am doing a quick quiz, I will put on music and those are the quizzes that I actually end up doing better in. It makes my mind think faster. Having more than one task like doing a quiz and listening to music can almost make my mind hyperfocus sometimes" (Participant K). This is similar to participant F. He explained that he can only listen to music when doing certain academic tasks. Participant F stated: "When I'm busy with intense or more theory-based work, I don't tend to listen to music or listen to music without lyrics. When I'm busy with Physics, Maths or equations, I jam a lot. I would be singing along to (name of artist removed)" (Participant F). Participant I described that he is able to use music to help him remain productive and in a flow state and complete academic tasks despite feeling stressed, but it is something that he did more frequently when he was an undergraduate student.

Some participants describe that listening to music puts their emotions of stress into perspective. Participant H described that listening to music "brings (her) back to earth or neutralises whatever the situation would have been" (Participant H). As participant A explained, listening to music allows him to ask himself, "what the point of being sad is" (Participant A) and remember that "nothing is the end of the world" (Participant A). Participant J also indicated that when she is stressed or having to cope with a stressful situation, she sometimes listens to music to normalise and validate her feelings of stress. Participant J said: "As I've said, it validates what I'm feeling. It makes aware that it is normal to feel what I'm feeling" (Participant J).

Participants A, J, G, and F indicated that they are seeking solutions in song lyrics to any problems that might be causing them stress. Participant A said it is important that music reminds him not to engage in behaviour that causes him to feel stressed, like procrastinating. Participant J said that a song once encouraged her to go to therapy to deal directly with emotions of sadness and grief. Participant I mentioned that he does not find solutions to the

problems he experiences as he does not find them particularly insightful. Participant G said that listening to music is not a solution-based exercise.

According to an existing study that investigated coping behaviours and listening to music, it was found that listening behaviours and habits can develop to enhance homeostatic functioning and selection of music can be based on the needs of a situation or environment (Reybrouck et al., 2020). As the participants are students, it is understandable that they would want to maintain a homeostatic state when in academic settings and coping with academic stress.

Music as Escapism. Participants described listening to music to distract themselves from negative emotions and ruminate on positive childhood memories. Participant I is an example of a participant who uses music to ruminate on positive childhood memories. Participant I explained: "I can listen to the instrumental component of Jazz music that I have never listened to and it sounds amazing but doesn't have the element of having been included in my childhood. It doesn't evoke certain emotions or emotions of the same intensity as much as Jazz music that I listened to growing up does" (Participant I). This demonstrates that participant I's music should be connected to a significant memory from his childhood to meaningfully facilitate rumination. Participant E mentioned that she feels that listening to music can allow her to recall childhood memories that reinforce the values that she grew up with. Participant E said that listening to music has "drawn (her) back to roots, the principles that (she) was raised with" (Participant E). A specific function of listening to music, as described by Crista in one of her reflections, was that it was "nostalgic" (Participant D). In the student sample, their ability for memories to be evoked could be explained by their age. Younger people are more likely to remember music-evoked emotions more vividly than older people (Belfi et al., 2016). Moreover, the transition from high school to university is associated with living away from home, so the participants were likely to think about

childhood memories even when not listening to music. Participant H contrasted this idea, and expressed in her interview that she does not associate music with past memories as she tends to socialise in social situations in which music is playing.

The study wanted to establish what the emotional aspects of the musical experiences of the participants were and how these experiences related to emotional regulation. The participants were also given the opportunity through the phrasing of the questions to bring up aspects of the experiences that were noteworthy and not related to emotional regulation. All the participants imparted some form of emotional aspect to their experiences of listening to music. The increase in emotional intensity and valence were commonly observed. Participants also described that listening to music had the functions of facilitating the emotional regulation strategies of distraction, rumination, response modulation and situation selection. Participants described that listening to music facilitating their coping by allowing them to understand their emotions or be more aware of the fact that they are stressed and in need of coping. Some participants described that listening to music was not the only thing that facilitated their coping. Less participants described listening to music describing the exact solutions to their problems. The roles meaningful roles of listening to music were also explored that were not related to emotional regulation such as the religious and entertaining functions of listening to music.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusion

The conclusion and discussion chapter will present and engage in the results outlined in the previous section and the research questions that the results addressed. the results outlined in the previous section as related to the research questions that were addressed by them, the strengths of the study, the limitations of the study and recommendations for future research.

Discussion

The main findings of the study were related to the power of listening to music and the functions that listening to music played in their lives. The power of listening to music theme refers to the significant aspects of the experiences of listening to music. The functions of listening to music theme refers to the reasons that participants listen to music and the role that music plays in their lives. The power of music encompassed subordinate themes such as changes in musical experiences, and music changing emotional valence and intensity.

The first research questions that the study addressed was if university students described experiences of listening to listening to their music that related to their emotions or not. The students in this study described experiences of listening to music that were related to their emotions. Specific examples of the emotional aspects of the experiences included emotional regulation, emotional valence, emotional intensity and coping. This has been shown to be true by existing research has shown that music has the potential to help facilitate regulate their emotions through the alteration of their emotions, specifically changing undesirable emotions (Cook et al., 2019) and coping with stressors (Miranda, 2019). Although the study did show that experiences of listening to music are related to emotions, because of the naturalistic and open-ended nature of the DES methodology, some participants

did describe that ruminating on undesirable emotions is cathartic and more beneficial than suppressing the undesirable emotions. Participants described that listening to music was something that allowed them to cope with stressors, but that they also relied on other things to help them cope. The extent to which listening to music facilitates coping can be personal and individual. This was something that could be explored as participants were able to draw on specific experiences of listening to music to reflect on their experiences of listening to music generally.

The second research question was related to how the emotional experiences of listening to music were described, what the main themes related to music were and how these themes were related to existing literature. The two main themes that emerged in the study were the power of music and the functions of music. The power of music themes were the aspects of the experiences of listening to music that the participants deemed noteworthy or significant. Existing literature found that the intense emotions that listening to music can elicit (Grewe et al., 2007), the social bonding that can occur from listening to music in social settings (Stupacher, 2022), and the memories that music can evoke (Belfi et al., 2016) are some examples of potentially significant aspects of listening to music. This was shown to be true in the study as well. Because participants were able to elaborate on their reflections during interviews, they were able to provide examples of the social settings in which music is listened to such as night clubs and parties and which specific emotions such as calmness and happiness that listening to music can elicit. Although many participants did describe that listening to music can evoke memories, one participant described that she did not feel that listening music does so. The open-ended nature of the reflections and interviews as well as the lack of prompting throughout the study meant that participants could describe contrasting ideas.

The functions that listening to music plays in the lives of the participants was a focus of the third research question that the study addressed. Some examples of functions included the function of music to facilitate an enhancement in spiritual wellbeing, motivation, the regulation of emotions, escapism, and focus. These functions were described in existing literature (Atiemo, 2006, Baltazar et al., 2019, Goltz & Sadakata, 2021, Krause et al., 2015, Schäfer et al., 2013, Smith et al., 2013, Thoma et al., 2012). Interestingly, many of the participants described that only specific types of music help them to focus on their studies in certain situations. Listening to music can be distracting in certain situations and aid focus in others, which is a discrepancy that was explored due to the open-ended nature of the interviews.

An implication of the study and themes more generally included that the emotional components of the experiences of listening to music could show which emotional regulation strategies listening to music can facilitate according to Gross' process theory of emotional regulation. In the study, participants described that listening to music can distract them from negative emotions, ruminate on positive emotions, seek objects and people who can facilitate positive emotions like musically inclined family members. All the participants described that music helped them to cope, but more participants described that music helps them to cope with stress by recognising their emotions of stress and although a few participants described musical lyrics providing them solutions to their problems, but this was rarer.

Strengths

The strength of the study was that it provided insight into both the participants' specific and general experiences of listening to music. These insights could inform music-based therapeutic interventions, emphasising the importance of the programmes addressing the specific needs of the individuals for which they are aimed for.

Moreover, the study was conducted on a student sample. As a sample, university students are susceptible to experiencing academic and personal stressors; they are likely to be a sample that listens to music to facilitate emotional regulation. The university students who participated in the study had a certain degree of test-wiseness, which meant they fully understood what was requested of them to participate in the study. As a result, their consent to participate in the study was fully autonomous, and their insights surrounding music were accurate and unbiased.

Given that the DES aspect of the study aimed to observe the participants' behaviour in their natural environment, the experiences of listening to music were not altered or influenced by an experimental environment in which the participants might have felt too nervous to reflect on their experiences in sufficient depth to answer the research questions. Having reflections on specific experiences of listening to music that were reflected on meant that their views and perspectives were specific and not about general experiences of listening to music.

A specific research question that was addressed was about the function of music in coping and stress. Existing literature showed that coping with stressors (Krause et al., 2023, Miranda, 2019; Spangler et al., 2002). The extent to which music could facilitate coping was something that the participants stated could vary depending on the nature of the stressor that needed to be coped with.

Limitations

Although associated with strengths, the study was also associated with certain limitations that could be addressed by future research.

The first limitation is that the study was cross-sectional and could not fully explore how the variety in the musical experiences that they have had over their lives.

Some of the participants described it as being demanding to answer the survey multiple times and balancing answering the survey with academic demands. As not all the participants shared this sentiment, this could have been due to the surveys not being capped or having a word limit.

Another limitation of the study was that it had to be completed in one academic year, and there was no time to encompass a quantitative element to the study to triangulate the qualitative findings. Although triangulation would have been preferrable, not having data to triangulate the findings did not compromise the quality of the qualitative data that was collected.

Finally, it was not guaranteed that the participants would have been listening to music when contacted or have a recent experience of listening to music that they could reflect on. Although the researcher did address the limitation by asking the participants when they would be most likely to listen to music, there was one instance when a participant had no experience to reflect upon. Considering this limitation, the researcher was still able to collect a fair amount of data due to contacting each participants on three occasions.

Recommendations for Future Research

Although there was an exploration of changes in the general experiences of listening to music, future research could explore the changes between specific experiences of listening to music over a longer span of time than the few days given between reflections.

Future research could explore the lived experiences of listening to music of a population that has more time to reflect on than students. Moreover, if the experiences of a student population are explored in future research, the research could be conducted when the students are most likely to be free and not during exams.

Future research on emotional regulation and listening to music could adopt a mixed method design in which qualitative data could be used to triangulate the findings of quantitative data.

Although psychology students were chosen specially for their likely ability to utilise and understand language about emotions and emotional regulation, it would be useful for future research to explore and compare the musical experiences of different groups of students such as engineering or architecture students to compare and contrast their experiences and perceptions.

Conclusion

The study explored the functions of music as well as the significant aspects of the experiences of listening to music through a naturalistic DES approach in which participants recorded meaningful aspects of specific experiences of listening to music on three occasions throughout a week. These experiences were used to prompt extensive discussion in a semi-structured interview in which they reflected on these experiences in more detail. The study was associated with some limitations and strengths. The limitations of the study were not substantial enough to mitigate the usefulness and strengths of the study but could be addressed by future research.

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Appendix A:

Reflective Questionnaire

Reflection

1. Please provide your student email address (studentnumber@wits.students.ac.za). This will not be disclosed or used in the final research study.

2. Please provide your name. This will not be disclosed or used in the final research study.

3. How soon after being contacted are you filling in this survey?

- ◯ Immediately
- ◯ 30 to 59 minutes
- ◯ 1 hour to 1 hour and 59 minutes
- ◯ 2 hours to 2 hours and 59 minutes
- ◯ 3 hours to 3 hours and 59 minutes
- ◯ 4 hours

4. If you are listening to music at the time of being contacted, what are some elements of that experience that stand out for you?

5. If you were not listening to music at the time of being contacted, which aspects of a recent experience of listening to music stood out for you?

Please reflect on an experience that took place within four hours of being contacted.

6. If listening to music was beneficial, please reflect on these benefits or positive aspects of your experience at the time.

Appendix B

The Structure of the Semi-structured Interview

Opening question:

- What was your experience of participating in this research study?

Funnelling questions:

- Were you listening to music when contacted?
- What are some aspects of the experiences that you reflected upon that stood out to you as significant?
- What are some of your beliefs and attitudes surrounding music generally?
- How have you experienced listening to self-selected music in the past and over the course of the study?
- If they do, comment on how these experiences link to your emotions?
- If so, how do experiences of listening to self-selected music link to your ability to stress?
- How soon after being contacted did you write your reflections?
- Would you say that the experiences that you have reflected on are similar to other experiences that you have had?
- What aspects of the experiences were surprising or novel?

Closing question:

- Is there anything about the process of participating in the study, listening to music and your emotions that you would like to share?

Appendix C:

Participant Information Sheet

Dear potential participant

My name is Antonina Mamontov. I am a Master's student in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr. Michael Pitman. I am conducting a research study on the momentary experiences of university students whilst listening to self-selected music.

I am inviting you to take part in two phases of the research study based on your responses to the first survey that you answered. You do not have to take part and can stop being a part of the study at any point. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. The interview transcripts and reflective survey responses will be confidential and anonymous. Although you will be requested to share your student email address, cellphone number and name for purposes of communication over the course of the study, no identifying information will be included in the questionnaire data and interview transcripts that I will be analysing; and I will not include any information that could identify you in the final version of the study. I will replace your name with a pseudonym in both the interview transcripts and the final version of the study, and all potentially identifying information will be permanently removed from all electronic survey platforms.

The first phase of the study is reflective. You will be asked (via WhatsApp, IMessage, SMS or Telegram as per your preference) to respond to some reflective prompts about music listening experiences in a short questionnaire format. I will send you a link to the survey containing the prompts on three occasions. These prompts will require you to reflect on a few aspects of listening to music at that time (or on that day). This is a research approach called “experience sampling”. It should not take you longer than 5-10 minutes to respond and you should do so as soon as possible after I contact you. You will be asked to reflect on a current experience of listening to music (if you are listening to music when I contact you) or the most recent one (in the frame of 2-4 hours prior to being contacted).

I will export your survey responses to my password protected computer and immediately and permanently delete them from the SurveyMonkey platform. I will need to retain your identifying information to be able to contact you and connect your survey responses to each other for the duration of the data collection process. I will not disclose or share this identifying information. After the second phase of the research study has finished, anonymised versions of the survey responses will be generated in which you will be referred to by a pseudonym and identifying information will be removed permanently.

The second part of the study will involve an in-person interview in a private room in the Emthonjeni Centre on campus. I will contact you to arrange the interview at a time that is convenient for you using your student email address. The interview should take about 30-40 minutes during which you will be asked to reflect upon your experiences in greater detail. I will bring a printed versions of your reflective survey responses should you find it helpful to refer to them. Before the commencement of the interview, I will ask you to sign a physical copy of a consent form to participate in the interview. You will be briefed about the interview process, what it entails and ask questions before participating in the interview. After the interview process, you will be given an opportunity to speak about your experience of participating in the research study and add additional information to your responses.

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview. This audio recording and your reflective questionnaire responses will be stored on my password-protected computer and anonymised versions of interview transcripts (using pseudonyms) will be used in the final research report. Only my research supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings and responses to the reflective surveys

for the purpose of transcribing and analysing them. The audio recordings will be deleted after 5-years but the anonymised version of data will be permanently stored on my password-protected computer. Other researchers will be able to use the anonymised version of the findings as secondary data, but only if the researcher in question has obtained ethical clearance to do so. The research will be written up as a research report in which the anonymised reflective questionnaires and interview transcripts will be reflected. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of the report, I will be happy to send it to you. You will be provided with the contact information of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) as a free resource to receive psychological counselling and support if you would like to use this resource after participating in the research study.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Antonina Mamontov, 1832483@studentwits.ac.za , 0828833060

Supervisor:

Dr. Michael Pitman , Michael.Pitman@wits.ac.za

Appendix D:

Consent Forms

A Descriptive Experience Sampling Study: Consent for the reflective phase of the study found in the demographic questionnaire

1. Your responses to the screening questions have identified you as a potentially suitable participant to participate in the study. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you can retract your participation in the study at any point until publication without any negative repercussions.
Should you agree to participate in the study, it will require you to answer certain reflective questions about the nature of the experiences that you are having when contacted by the researcher on three occasions through a week via WhatsApp, IMessage, Telegram as per your preference. These questions are not sensitive or distressing in nature and short.

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study YES/NO
I understand that before participating in the study, I will have to provide my cellular phone number for the researcher to be able to contact me YES/NO
I understand that each reflective writing session should take about 5-10 minutes. YES/NO
I agree that my responses may be reproduced in anonymous form, in the research study. YES/NO
I understand that although that my reflective writing pieces with identifying information will be permanently deleted off the SurveyMonkey platform and exported onto the researcher's password protected computer. YES/NO
I understand that my reflective writing pieces will be anonymised after the second stage of the study and my identifying information will be removed. YES/NO
I understand that although the researcher might have access to my identifying information during the data collection phase of the study that none of this information will be disclosed. YES/NO
I understand that the anonymsed versions of my reflective questionnaire responses will be permanently stored on the researcher's password protected computer. YES/NO
I agree that direct quotations from my responses, in an anonymous form, may be used by the researcher in their research study. YES/NO
I understand that my participation will remain anonymous in the final research report (my name or other identifying data may not be used by the researcher in the research report). YES/NO
I agree that other researchers may use the anonymised information for future researcher if they obtain ethical clearance. YES/NO
I understand that the findings of the research study may be published in the form of a research article or conference proceedings. YES/NO

By saying that you consent to participate in the reflective part of the study, you agree to the terms mentioned above.
Do you consent to participating in the study?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

A Descriptive Experience Sampling Study: A consent form for the interview phase of the study

Antonina Mamontov

I, ……., agree to participate in the interview portion of this research phase of the research project.

Requirements of participation in the study:

- You have been contacted as the responses to the questions have identified as a potentially suitable participant to participate in the above study. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can retract your contribution to the study at any time until publication without any negative repercussions.
- Should you agree to participate in the study, it will require you to answer certain reflective questions about the nature of the experiences that you are having when contacted by the researcher on three occasions throughout a week.
- Once the reflective stage of the study is done, you will arrange with the researcher to have an in-person interview in which your experiences will be discussed. This will form the interview portion of the study. The interview portion of the study will require participating in a single 30-40 minute interview with the researcher in the Emthonjeni Centre on campus. In this interview, using the reflections that you have made in the first stage of the study, you will be able to describe your experiences in more detail. This interview venue will be private to respect your privacy throughout the interview.
- No information that could disclose your identity will be used in the research study and interview transcripts will be anonymised. You will be referred to by a pseudonym.

I agree to the following:

The research study was explained to me. I understand what this study is about.	YES	NO
I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study	YES	NO
I agree that the interview will be audio recorded	YES	NO
I agree that direct quotations from my interview may be used by the researcher in their research report	YES	NO
I agree that my participation will remain anonymous (my name or other identifying data will not be used by the researcher in their research report/manuscript/book chapter)	YES	NO
I agree for audio recordings of the interview to be taken for the purposes of transcribing it and that this audio recording will be stored on a		

password protected computer and deleted after 5 years and only used by the researcher for the sake of transcribing the interview. Anonymsed versions of the interview transcripts will be permanently stored on the researcher's password protected laptop and reflected in the study.

YES NO

I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide in my interview (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on. I agree that other researchers may use the information I provide during the interview that I participate in (depending on their own ethics clearance being obtained) but my name and any personal information will not be used or passed on

YES NO

…… (signature)
…… (name of participant)
…… (date)



…… (signature)
Antonina Mamontov…… (name of researcher/person seeking consent)

Appendix E:

Participant Invitation

Good day!

Dear potential participant

My name is Antonina Mamontov

I am a currently studying a MA in Psychological and Social Research and am conducting a study that aims to explore the lived experiences of students who listen to music frequently and find it a meaningful activity for them to engage in. Participation in the study would involve a period of experience-sampling, during which I will occasionally contact you and ask you to briefly reflect on your current (or most recent) music-listening experience; and this will be followed by an interview in which you would be able to elaborate and reflect further on these experiences.

If you are interested in finding out more about the study and possibly volunteering to become a participant, please click on the link below and complete a brief screening survey:

https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/WJBXNYR

This screening questionnaire will assess your suitability to participate in the study based on your responses. Please be advised that if there are more potential participants who respond to the screening survey than can be accommodated in the study, there is a possibility that not every respondent who is suitable to participate in the study will be able to at this time.

Should you have trouble accessing the information, please contact me on

antoninamamontov@gmail.com

Thank you for your time

Antonina Mamontov

Appendix F:

Access Request Letter

. To whom it may concern:

This is a request from Antonina Mamontov, who is a Master's student in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg under the supervisor of Dr. Michael Pitman to source Postgraduate and Undergraduate psychology students studying at the University of the Witwatersrand and conduct semi-structured interviews with them in the Emthonjeni Centre on campus. This will be part of a study called Music and the Emotional Regulation of University Students: A Descriptive Experience Sampling Study. This study has the aim of exploring the momentary experiences of students listening to self-selected music. The study will take place in two stages over the course of two weeks in the second semester of 2024. The first stage of the study will take place over one week and the second stage will commence once the first stage has finished .

The researcher has obtained permission from the University Registrar to conduct the study using Wits students; and an unconditional ethical clearance has also been obtained from Wits' HREC (Non-medical). The study will require the assistance of the course coordinators of Psychology modules to share electronic versions of a participant invitation on Ulwazi. This invite will contain screening questions that will identify suitable participants. Suitable participants will then be contacted by the researcher via their student emails provided in the screening survey and provided with a link to a demographic questionnaire. In this questionnaire, participants will receive more information about the study, consent to participate in the first stage of the study and provide demographic information. For the first stage of the study (known as the reflective stage), participants will receive links to a reflective survey in which they will spend 5-10 minutes reflecting upon what they are experiencing at the time of being contacted.

Participation will be entirely voluntary, there will not be any incentives to participate in the research study but there is no foreseen risk in participating in the study either. The researcher will also require access to a private interview venue in the The Emthonjeni Centre for the second part of the study. private and semi-structured interviews with each of the participants that will last 30-40 minutes.

With the permission of the participants, the interview will be audio recorded. This audio recording will be stored on a password-protected computer for a year and deleted after 5 years. Only the researcher and their supervisor will have access to the audio recording of the interview for the purpose of transcribing it. The research findings will be able to be used in future research, but only if the researcher in question has obtained ethical clearance to do so.

This research study will be written up as a research report and the participants will be informed of this. The report will be available on the university library website. If they participants would like to receive a summary of the findings of this report, the researcher will send it to them. The research study will be able to be published in the form of an article or conference proceedings. Their participation in the study will require you to consent to the interviews to be recorded and transcribed, and for direct quotes to be used in the research study for the purpose of analysing them.

Antonina Mamontov

Student number: 1832483

Date: 17/05/2024



Appendix G:

Initial Screening Survey

Initial screening survey

1. Thank you for clicking on the link to this screening survey. My name is Antonina Mamontov. This study will explore your lived experiences as a student who enjoys listening to self-selected music and does so frequently and in different situations.
The study will be divided into two parts, namely a reflective phase and an interview phase.

In the reflective phase, participants will be contacted by me and given the link to a survey containing reflective prompts that will encourage them to reflect upon a recent experience of listening to music or the current experiences of listening to music that they might be having when contacted.

The second part will be an interview in which participants will be able to reflect upon their experiences in more detail.

Please be aware that if you do participate in the research, your privacy and personal information will be protected throughout the research study. Any identifying information (such as your name, student email address and cellphone number) will be stored on a password protected computer and will be permanently deleted once survey responses have been connected. I will not disclose any identifying information that you provide. Only my supervisor and I will have access to the data, and when I share the results of the research study, I will not include your name or anything else that could identify you.

Please note that if more than 12 suitable participants that respond to this survey, the first twelve suitable participants will be contacted by email and sent a link to a demographic questionnaire to allow them to participate in the rest of the study. In this eventuality, not all suitable respondents will be able to participate in the study.

- ◯ The information is clear
- ◯ The information is not clear

2. Do you have a cellular phone on which you can access the internet?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

3. Are you studying at the University of the Witwatersrand?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

4. Do you have any hearing problems?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

5. Do you listen to music frequently?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

6. Do you listen to music throughout the week and in different settings (such as when you are in your car, in a music class, on campus or at home)?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

7. If you have answered "yes" to questions 2,3, 5 and 6 and don't have hearing issues, please provide your student email address to receive a link to a demographic questionnaire (studentnumber@students.wits.ac.za). This email address will not be disclosed or used in the final research study.

8. Please provide your name. This information will not be disclosed or used in the final research study.

Appendix H

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic information and consent

Dear potential participant

My name is Antonina Mamontov. I am a Master's student in Social and Psychological Research at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. My supervisor is Dr. Michael Pitman. I am conducting a research study on the momentary experiences of university students whilst listening to self-selected music.

I am inviting you to take part in two phases of the research study based on your responses to the first survey that you answered. You do not have to take part and can stop being a part of the study at any point. You will not lose any services, benefits or rights you would normally have if you decide not to join. The interview transcripts and reflective survey responses will be confidential and anonymous. Although you will be requested to share your student email address, cellphone number and name for purposes of communication over the course of the study, no identifying information will be included in the questionnaire data and interview transcripts that I will be analysing; and I will not include any information that could identify you in the final version of the study. I will replace your name with a pseudonym in both the interview transcripts and the final version of the study, and all potentially identifying information will be permanently removed from all electronic survey platforms.

The first phase of the study is reflective. You will be asked (via WhatsApp, IMessage, SMS or Telegram as per your preference) to respond to some reflective prompts about music listening experiences in a short questionnaire format. I will send you a link to the survey containing the prompts on three occasions. These prompts will require you to reflect on a few aspects of listening to music at that time (or on that day). This is a research approach called "experience sampling". It should not take you longer than 5-10 minutes to respond and you should do so as soon as possible after I contact you. You will be asked to reflect on a current experience of listening to music (if you are listening to music when I contact you) or the most recent one (in the frame of 2-4 hours prior to being contacted).

I will export your survey responses to my password protected computer and immediately and permanently delete them from the SurveyMonkey platform. I will need to retain your identifying information to be able to contact you and connect your survey responses to each other for the duration of the data collection process. I will not disclose or share this identifying information. After the second phase of the research study has finished, anonymised versions of the survey responses will be generated in which you will be referred to by a pseudonym and identifying information will be removed permanently.

The second part of the study will involve an in-person interview in a private room in the Emthonjeni Centre on campus. I will contact you to arrange the interview at a time that is convenient for you using your student email address. The interview should take about 30-40 minutes during which you will be asked to reflect upon your experiences in greater detail. I will bring a printed versions of your reflective survey responses should you find it helpful to refer to them. Before the commencement of the interview, I will ask you to sign a physical copy of a consent form to participate in the interview. You will be briefed about the interview process, what it entails and ask questions before participating in the interview. After the interview process, you will be given an opportunity to speak about your experience of participating in the research study and add additional information to your responses.

With your permission, I would like to audio-record the interview. This audio recording and your reflective questionnaire responses will be stored on my password-protected computer and anonymised versions of interview transcripts (using pseudonyms) will be used in the final research report. Only my research supervisor and I will have access to the audio recordings and responses to the reflective surveys for the purpose of transcribing and analysing them. The audio recordings will be deleted after 5-years but the anonymised version of data will be permanently stored on my password-protected computer. Other researchers will be able to use the anonymised version of the findings as secondary data, but only if the researcher in question has obtained ethical clearance to do so. The research will be written up as a research report in which the anonymised reflective questionnaires and interview transcripts will be reflected. If you would like to receive a summary of the findings of the report, I will be happy to send it to you. You will be provided with the contact information of the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (SADAG) as a free resource to receive psychological counselling and support if you would like to use this resource after participating in the research study.

If you have any questions during or afterwards about this research study, feel free to contact me or my supervisor on the details listed below. If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical procedures of this research study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical), telephone +27(0) 11 717 1408, email hrecnon-medical@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Antonina Mamontov, 1832483@studentwits.ac.za , 0828833060

Supervisor:

Dr. Michael Pitman , Michael.Pitman@wits.ac.za

1. Your responses to the screening questions have identified you as a potentially suitable participant to participate in the study. Participation in the study is entirely voluntary and you can retract your participation in the study at any point until publication without any negative repercussions.
Should you agree to participate in the study, it will require you to answer certain reflective questions about the nature of the experiences that you are having when contacted by the researcher on three occasions through a week via WhatsApp, IMessage, Telegram as per your preference. These questions are not sensitive or distressing in nature and short.

I understand that I can volunteer to take part in the study YES/NO
I understand that before participating in the study, I will have to provide my cellular phone number for the researcher to be able to contact me YES/NO
I understand that each reflective writing session should take about 5-10 minutes. YES/NO
I agree that my responses may be reproduced in anonymous form, in the research study. YES/NO
I understand that although that my reflective writing pieces with identifying information will be permanently deleted off the SurveyMonkey platform and exported onto the researcher's password protected computer. YES/NO
I understand that my reflective writing pieces will be anonymised after the second stage of the study and my identifying information will be removed. YES/NO
I understand that although the researcher might have access to my identifying information during the data collection phase of the study that none of this information will be disclosed. YES/NO
I understand that the anonymsed versions of my reflective questionnaire responses will be permanently stored on the researcher's password protected computer. YES/NO
I agree that direct quotations from my responses, in an anonymous form, may be used by the researcher in their research study. YES/NO
I understand that my participation will remain anonymous in the final research report (my name or other identifying data may not be used by the researcher in the research report). YES/NO
I agree that other researchers may use the anonymised information for future researcher if they obtain ethical clearance. YES/NO
I understand that the findings of the research study may be published in the form of a research article or conference proceedings. YES/NO

By saying that you consent to participate in the reflective part of the study, you agree to the terms mentioned above.
Do you consent to participating in the study?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

2. Would you be willing to participate in a single semi-structured interview with the researcher for the second part of the study after signing a consent form on the day of the interview?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

3. What is your age in years?

4. What is your gender?

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Prefer not to say
- ◯ Other (please specify)

5. What is/are your home language(s)? Select all/any that apply from the options below

- ☐ English
- ☐ Zulu
- ☐ Afrikaans
- ☐ Ndebele
- ☐ Venda
- ☐ Tshonga
- ☐ Tswana
- ☐ Sotho
- ☐ isiXhosa
- ☐ Swathi
- ☐ Other language (please specify)

6. Do you play one or more musical instrument?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

7. If you can play a musical instrument, have you had formal training to learn how to do so?

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

8. Check the boxes of the musical instrument(s) that you can play?

- [ ] Guitar
- [ ] Piano
- [ ] Violin
- [ ] Viola
- [ ] Drums
- [ ] Voice (only an option for participants who have received formal singing lessons or traning)
- [ ] Other(s) (please specify)

9. Please select an applicable statement for each genre of music.

	I don't like it	It's ok	I like it	I love it	I have never heard about it before
Rock	○	○	○	○	○
Hip hop	○	○	○	○	○
Jazz	○	○	○	○	○
Kwaito	○	○	○	○	○
Heavy metal	○	○	○	○	○
Classical	○	○	○	○	○
House	○	○	○	○	○
Electronic/trance	○	○	○	○	○
Gospel	○	○	○	○	○

Other(s) (please specify)

10. Do you listen to music on a daily basis?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

11. If you do listen to music daily, how long do you do so?

- ○ less than an hour
- ○ 1-2 hours
- ○ 3-4 hours
- ○ 5-6 hours
- ○ More than 6 hours

12. When have you noticed that you are most likely to listen to music? Select the option(s) that apply.

- [ ] In the morning
- [ ] In the afternoon
- [ ] In the evening

13. What role does music play in your life? Select the applicable option(s) below.

- [ ] To concentrate
- [ ] To relax
- [ ] To get you in a good mood
- [ ] To block out sound
- [ ] Other (please specify)

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I'm going to inform you of the procedure of the study and what will be expected of you as a participant in this Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) study. None of your identifying information will be disclosed or shared in the final writeup of the research report.

1) In the first phase of the study, you will be contacted on three occasions in a week on the cellular phone number that you will provide below and on a messaging platform of your preference. In these contacts, I will send you a link to a reflective questionnaire. Before answering this questionnaire, you will be given the opportunity to test the link on your mobile device. This questionnaire should be answered as soon as possible (not more than four hours after receiving the link). This questionnaire will not take more than 10 minutes to complete. It will ask you to reflect on the current experience of listening to music when contacted or the most recent experience of doing so (not longer than 4 hours prior to being contacted).

2) In the second phase of the study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-40 minute interview. This will take place in the Emthonjeni Centre on campus. In this interview, you will elaborate on your experiences from the reflective phase of the study. To facilitate this, I will bring printed copies of your responses of the study should you need to refer to them.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Antonina Mamontov, 1832483@students.wits.ac.za

14. When would you be most likely to be able to engage in the necessary reflective writing during the week? Select the option(s) that apply/applies.

- [ ] Monday
- [ ] Tuesday
- [ ] Wednesday
- [ ] Thursday
- [ ] Friday
- [ ] Saturday
- [ ] Sunday

15. Which part(s) of the day would you be most likely to participate in the reflective part of the study? Choose any/all that apply.

- [ ] In the morning (8:00-11:00)
- [ ] In the middle of the day (12:00)
- [ ] In the early afternoon (13:00-14:00)
- [ ] In the late afternoon (15:00-17:00)
- [ ] In the evening (18:00-20:00)
- [ ] Other (please specify)

16. Please indicate which messaging platform that you would like to be contacted on for the first stage of the study.

- ◯ WhatsApp
- ◯ IMessage
- ◯ SMS
- ◯ Telegram

17. Please leave your cellular phone number so that you can be contacted by the researcher in the first stage of the study. It will not be disclosed or used in the final research report.

18. Please confirm the Wits student email address that you provided in the first survey (studentnumber@students.wits.ac.za). It will not be disclosed or used in the final research report.

19. Please provide your name. It will not be disclosed or used in the final research report.

Appendix I:

Initial Procedure and Instructions in the Demographic Questionnaire

Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I'm going to inform you of the procedure of the study and what will be expected of you as a participant in this Descriptive Experience Sampling (DES) study. None of your identifying information will be disclosed or shared in the final writeup of the research report.

1) In the first phase of the study, you will be contacted on three occasions in a week on the cellular phone number that you will provide below and on a messaging platform of your preference. In these contacts, I will send you a link to a reflective questionnaire. Before answering this questionnaire, you will be given the opportunity to test the link on your mobile device. This questionnaire should be answered as soon as possible (not more than four hours after receiving the link). This questionnaire will not take more than 10 minutes to complete. It will ask you to reflect on the current experience of listening to music when contacted or the most recent experience of doing so (not longer than 4 hours prior to being contacted).
2) In the second phase of the study, you will be asked to participate in a 30-40 minute interview. This will take place in The Emthonjeni Centre on campus. In this interview, you will elaborate on your experiences from the reflective phase of the study. To facilitate this, I will bring printed copies of your responses of the study should you need to refer to them.

Thank you

Yours sincerely

Antonina Mamontov, 1832483@students.wits.ac.za

Appendix J

Bracketing and Reflexivity

Bracketing	Reflexivity
The researcher's understanding of the term music and emotional regulation What I understand the term self-selected music to mean based on the background reading that I did was music autonomously selected by the listener. Moreover, emotional regulation is anything that is done to change the intensity, nature or appropriateness of an emotion. The roles of music encompass any impact of listening to music that a person listening to music experiences. The understanding of emotion and mood An emotion is how an individual feels in a moment whilst mood is how an individual feels over a prolonged period of time. Emotions experienced for a long period of time can turn into moods. Positive emotions evoked by music Positive emotions are what I understand to be emotions that are enjoyable and desirable. Negative emotions are emotions that are undesirable and not enjoyable to feel. Bracketing about the whole research process: My understanding of a qualitative research approach is a research approach that is open-ended and explores perceptions and experiences specifically.	Assumption surrounding emotional regulation and experiences of listening to music: The main assumptions that I have surrounding emotional regulation, and music is that the listening to music can change negative emotions to be positive. This is due to my own overwhelmingly positive experiences of listening to music. This will mean that when interviewing and analysis data, I will take this into account to avoid not analysing negative experiences of listening to music. Moreover, I need to consider the cultural nuances that might influence how participants make meaning of their experiences of listening to music. My musical preferences My musical preferences are informed by my family context and upbringing. I have received three years of classical piano training, so I do have a preference to choose to listen to classical music overwhelmingly as a result. My specific reasons for listening to music: I find that I listen to music to evoke pleasant memories of listening to music concerts with my mother and watching movies with my father. I also listen to music to distract me from negative emotions, when I seek to feel positive emotions like feeling calmness and contentedness. As I am a student myself, and

	expect listening to music to have a positive emotional effect on me, it is important that I do not fail to interpret when this is not the case or negative experiences of listening to music. Reflexivity about the research process: I found that I enjoyed the open-ended nature of a qualitative approach. One thing that I did find particularly difficult about the research process itself was that I had to think about how themes were phased and if my understanding and interpretation of the themes came across through the words and phrases that I used.

Appendix K

General Summary of Data

General trends from the demographic questionnaire:

General impression: All the participants are suitable participants for the DES study as they all listen to music daily, study psychology and do not have hearing problems.

All the participants listened to music daily for varying amounts of time. The amount of time that participants listened to music for daily ranged from less than an hour to more than six. Most of the participants (9 out of 12) indicated that they are female whilst 3 participants indicated that they are male. All the participants indicated that they use music to get in a good mood in the demographic questionnaire whilst a smaller proportion of participants indicated The home languages of the participants included English, Afrikaans, Sotho, Zulu, and Speeding or Northern Soto. A large proportion (58,3 %) of the participants indicated that they loved listening to classical music and 50% indicated that they loved listening to Gospel music. Two participants (16,7% of the sample) indicated that they have musical training in the form of piano, guitar and vocal training.

General trends from reflections

Sally was the only participant who immediately completed the reflective questionnaires when sent them. All the participants managed to complete their reflections within the four-hour time stipulation. Although most participants reflected on recent experiences of listening to music, there were some instances of participants were listening to music when contacted. In one of Prasilla's reflection she indicated that she had not listened to music when contact or 4-hours prior, so this reflection was not used. Participants generally reflected on the roles that listening to music played and described their experiences of listening of listening of listening of listening to music which were both

Appendix L

Cases and Analysis of Other Participants

Participant A

Participant A is a twenty-six-year-old male who loves listening to Gospel, House, and Kwaito music. Participant A described that he found participating in the study to be a positive one as he reflected upon his experience of listening to music. Participant A's home language is Sotho, he listens to music daily for 3-4 hours and has no musical training. in his demographic questionnaire, participant A indicated that he listens to music to relax, to get in a good mood and connect to his spiritual wellbeing. the significant amount of time that alex listens to music for on a daily basis and the fact that he reflected on experiences that occurred when he was contacted meant that he would be able to describe his meaning-making processes and experiences of listening to music significantly. i was aware that although there were not many aspects of participant A's that could render their interpretations biased, participant A is a postgraduate psychology student like the researcher, so they did have to be aware of that contextual similarity for the researcher to not assume participant A's meaning-making processes mirror theirs. Participant A's experience of participating in the des phase of the study and reflecting on specific experiences of listening to music was a "positive one" and that the questions "evoked some important aspects to focus on that showed that music had meaning. music is not just about listening every day. you have to listen, to understand, to relate, to relax your body and mind".

The Universal Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant A expressed his belief that music is societally meaningful, culturally significant and is universal in nature. Participant A said: "I think that music is not just music. It is rooted somewhere. There is a cultural aspect. It helps us to connect with our spiritual wellbeing and music is a collective thing that brings people together". "Music makes people share the same sentiment at some point in life. I think that your attitude about music goes

with your mood at a certain point. On Sundays you may play Gospel music. In the afternoons, when I'm preparing my dinner, I will play RnB. For me, music goes with a context in time" . Participant A feels that music can bring individuals from different cultures together and serve a religious function. Listening to music allows people to understand each other and experience the same emotions.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant A stated that his experiences of listening to music "Previously, when listening to music, I wouldn't put myself in it. Previously, I would just listen to music for the sake of listening and not to relate or put myself in it. Now, I've developed an interest in music. I listen to music whenever I get a chance. When I go out, I listen to music. I will listen to music even when I'm doing some sitting activities. When I'm studying, I'm listening to music. When I'm cooking, I'm listening to music. I even listen to music when studying. When I'm preparing for my day, I listen to music. For me, I've developed a love and interest in music". Participant A expressed that the interest he has in music could be explained by his emotional and cognitive development experienced during his young adulthood and his training in Psychology. This development could have facilitated an enhanced self-awareness to be able to recognise his own emotions in songs and an overarching curiosity and ability to lean about the music that he listens to.

The Somatic Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant A expressed that during the specific experiences of listening to music that he reflected on, what was significant was the sensation he felt in his body when he listened to music. Participant A explained: "I remember that I was once tired because I had a long day and whilst I was playing music, I could feel a physical sensation in my body. I tried to regroup myself. My mind could restart and focus on things like never before". As someone who studies Psychology level who is used to focusing on academic tasks, Participant A is likely to know

what his body feels like when he is not motivated or focused in contrast to when he is focused and alert.

Listening to Music for Motivation

Participant A expressed that there are certain songs that he listens to for different occasions, and that it can allow him to concentrate. Participant expressed: I even play music when I am doing my schoolwork, but not music that has lyrics. I only listen to beats or instrumental music" . Alex explained that he specifically listens to instrumental music when trying to concentrate as he will not be tempted to sing along to song lyrics. Participant elaborated: "The reason that instrumental music can allow me to concentrate. When I'm listening to lyrics, I will start to sing along. Instrumental music is easier for me to concentrate whilst listening to because the beats have nothing that can distract me".

Music for Emotional Regulation

Alex alluded to the fact that listening to music can distract from the "stress" or "bad emotions" that him might be feeling. Before his interview, Alex stated that he feels that the stress of having to consistently study and adhere to deadlines can be stressful, and that music can be a means for him to distract himself from the stress.

Music Changing Emotional Intensity/Valence

Music also "makes (participant A's) emotions "more intense". Alternatively, listening to music can provide him with a safe space to "supress some emotional turmoil" within himself. Participant A's description of music facilitating

Participant A described instances in which he listens to music to feel positive emotions after feeling negative ones. Participant A said: "When I'm sad, I will play music and ask myself what the point of being sad is. It lifts you!". Another negative emotion that Participant A tries to change by listening to music is laziness and feeling demotivated. Participant A described: "When I'm lazy to do my schoolwork, or lazy to get out of bed and

start my, I will turn on my music and will play music that conveys motivation" . As participant A is a student, being unmotivated to do academic tasks can lead to repercussions like him missing assignment deadlines. He uses music to ensure that his emotion of laziness does not last long.

Listening to Music for Coping

Participant A said that music can facilitate coping as it does allow him to understand his emotions and be able to put them into perspective if he is not engaging in an academic activity that would prevent him from listening to music. Participant A said: "When I'm feeling overwhelmed, I will play music. Each mood that I'm in can go with music as long as I don't have something super important to do that makes me stop playing music. When I'm stressed, I just play music. I know that I will be fine by the end of the day or two hours". When describing his academic context before his interview, participant A said that he does sometimes have to do academic work that is not conducive to listening to music such as doing interview transcriptions.

Participant expressed that listening to music and paying close attention to the lyrics in music as being a means of coping if the lyrics prove to be meaningful to him and provide him insight into the stress or problems that he might be experiencing. He finds motivational music lyrics as providing him a solution to his desire to procrastinate. Participant A explained: "When I listen to music on YouTube and can see the lyrics on my computer monitor. I can relate and detach myself from certain things like procrastination" . The bad habits that participant A described would cause him emotional distress as this would have negative implications for him achieving academic deadlines.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The universal aspect of listening to music 2.The changes in the experiences of listening to music 3.The somatic aspect of listening to music 4. Music changing emotional intensity/valence	1.“Music makes people share the same sentiment at some point in life. I think that your attitude about music goes with your mood at a certain point. On Sundays you may play Gospel music. In the afternoons, when I’m preparing my dinner, I will play RnB. For me, music goes with a context in time” . 2.Now, I’ve developed an interest in music. I listen to music whenever I get a chance. When I go out, I listen to music. I will listen to music even when I’m doing some sitting activities. When I’m studying, I’m listening to music. When I’m cooking, I’m listening to music. I even listen to music when studying. When I’m preparing for my day, I listen to music. For me, I’ve developed a love and interest in music”. 3.“I remember that I was once tired because I had a long day and whilst I was playing music, I could feel a physical sensation in my body. I tried to regroup myself. My mind could restart and focus on things like never before”. 4.“When I’m sad, I will play music and ask myself what the point of being sad is. It lifts you!”.
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Listening to music for motivation 2. Music for emotional regulation 3.Listening to music for coping	1.“when I am lazy to do my schoolwork……will play music that conveys motivation”

	2.“I even play music when I am doing my schoolwork, but not music that has lyrics. I only listen to beats or instrumental music” . 3. “When I’m feeling overwhelmed, I will play music. Each mood that I’m in can go with music as long as I don’t have something super important to do that makes me stop playing music. When I’m stressed, I just play music. I know that I will be fine by the end of the day or two hours” .

Participant B

Participant B is a 34-year old female whose home language is English and enjoys listening to rock, electronic, kwaito, classical music, house and trance music. Participant B listens to music for 1-2 hours daily, has no musical training and indicated in her demographic questionnaire that she listens to music to relax and get in a good mood. Before starting the interview, Participant B indicated that she does work and study part-time before her interview. This is likely to inform the function that listening to music has in her life as well as what she believes to be true about music. Participant B did say express that she enjoyed the experience of participating in the study as she “started to become more aware of why (she) listen(s) to music and (her) motives” .

The Cultural/Social Aspects of Listening to Music

Participant B expressed that it is her belief that music is something that is often prevalent in social settings such as parties. Participant B explained: “People meet in social settings and there is oftentimes music”. Before the interview, participant B said that she has had many career changes and has been put in different social and professional settings. This might have informed her belief as she observed the different contexts in which music can be used.

Participant B expressed her belief that “music that comes into different cultures and people rights of passages and music facilitates that interaction”. Participant B is from a culturally diverse South African context, so has likely interacted with people from different cultures and can see the extent to how prevalent music is in all South African cultures.

Participant B expressed that she believes that music can be listened to in situations that would otherwise be boring. Participant B expressed her belief that mundane tasks can be made more enjoyable if paired with music. Participant B described: “When I am working and doing mundane tasks like packing the dishwasher I will usually pair those tasks with music. It just makes those experiences more enjoyable and incentivises me to get the task done”. As participant B is used to meeting deadlines in a professional and academic context, Avery likely learnt how to effectively incentivise herself to be productive.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant B expressed that she has more of an awareness of the types of experiences of listening to music that she enjoys as well and the types of genres she listens to. The genes of music that Avery has listened to are diverse, and her musical preferences and experiences have changed as she has been introduced to new genres. Participant B stated: “My music taste has changed throughout my life. I have listened to and been through many genres for my music taste to look like it is today. It has waxed and waned in terms of the genres that I listen to…I feel that I currently know what I like to listen to” . Participant B’s diverse range of musical preferences are likely related to her needing music to have different functions for the different needs that she might have that could be personal, professional or academic.

Listening to Music for Motivation

Participant B expressed that she listens to music when she needs motivation or inspiration when writing. Participant B said: “There are certain moments like when I am writing

research, doing my thesis or things like that, it is nice to have music to help me to write. It gives me more motivation. It gives me more words". Participant B said before the interview that she works as a Psychometrist and is a Postgraduate Psychology student. Both of these roles require be able to write reports, so it is understandable that she uses listening to music to allow her to write well when she feels uninspired. In a reflection, participant B expressed that she feels that music can help her concentrate and can enhance her productivity by helping her "stay focused" as she could feel "less restricted". Participant B stated before her interview that she has high expectations of herself academically. It is understandable that being productive is important to Avery.

Music as Escapism

In a reflection, participant B expressed that she was able to "explore past memories" whilst still feeling connected to herself and "fully present". She also expressed that these memories are pleasant memories where she "felt alive" which she attributes with "being with loved ones, nature, travelling, having fun and doing activities" that make her happy. The memories evoked by music are positive. Participant B did not insinuate or express that listening to music is associated with negative memories. The use of the word "alive" demonstrates the power of music to evoke pleasant memories that are associated with pleasant emotions.

Music Changing Emotional Valence and Intensity

Participant B expressed that listening to music does relate to her emotions. She expressed that listening to music "elevates (her) emotions" . Participant B particularly commented that listening to music can intensify her mood when she is already feeling positive. Participant B explained: "If I am with my friends, it might elevate your emotions. You might feel a lot happier in those situations". The extent to which music can enhance the intensity of her emotions depends on the context in which music is listened to.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant B explained that she can sometimes actively listen to music when she desires to feel emotions of tranquillity and calmness. Participant B explained that if she is on her "own and listening to music", she will be "a lot more tranquil" than when she starts and "can feel it within (her) body". Participant B described music to be "a tool that (she) can use to just feel more tranquil and relaxed" and facilitate her ability to feel a "deep sense of tranquillity and happiness". In a reflection, participant B explained that music can be paired with mundane tasks as a form of distraction. She stated that she tends "to pair mundane tasks with something enjoyable like music" to make something that would have otherwise been boring or emotionally tedious a "bearable experience" . It is not surprising that Avery noted that listening to music has having emotional function as she studies psychology and is aware of shifts in her emotions.

Participant B expressed that she feels stressed when she feels frustrated or is unable to focus on academic tasks due to feeling overwhelmingly stressed. Listening to music serves to understand what she is feeling and how to makes these feelings less intense. Participant B said: "It is a tool in my personal toolkit that I can pull on when I am stressed, anxious, blocked or frustrated. It is a tool that I can use to just feel more tranquil and relaxed. That is especially when it comes to studying". Participant B is invested in developing an understanding how to assist herself when she is feeling undesirable emotions like stress and "frustra(tion)" . Before her interview, participant B said that this desire stemmed from her parents, who always encouraged her to be aware of her emotions and how to manage undesirable ones .

Participant B expressed that she does not look for the solutions to problems that cause her stress in musical lyrics as the genre of music does not have many lyrics. Participant B explained: "The genre that I listen to has little words. For me, the beat and rhythm help me more than the words. I like the familiarity of the words". Musical lyrics do however reflect "experiences in the past" and would have provided her with solutions to problems she experienced in the past. As participant B has moved provinces and changed jobs frequently, it is not surprising that she enjoys the stability and assurance that familiar lyrics offer her.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The social/cultural aspects of listening to music 2. The changes in the experiences of listening to music 3. Music changing emotional valence and intensity	1."People meet in social settings and there is oftentimes music". 2. "My music taste has changed throughout my life. I have listened to and been through many genres for my music taste to look like it is today. It has waxed and waned in terms of the genres that I listen to…I feel that I currently know what I like to listen to". 3. "If I am with my friends, it might elevate your emotions. You might feel a lot happier in those situations" .
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Listening to music for motivation/inspiration 2.Music as escapism 3. Listening to music for motivation 4. Music for emotional regulation 5.Music for coping	1. "There are certain moments like when I am writing research, doing my thesis or things like that, it is nice to have music to help me to write. It gives me more motivation. It gives me more words". 2. "being with loved ones, nature, travelling, having fun and doing activities". 3. "It also helped me to remain focused".

	4. “deep sense of tranquillity and happiness”. 5. “It is a tool in my personal toolkit that I can pull on when I am stressed, anxious, blocked or frustrated. It is a tool that I can use to just feel more tranquil and relaxed. That is especially when it comes to studying”.

Participant C

Participant C is a nineteen-year-old female whose home language is Afrikaans. Participant C loves listening to Rock, Gospel, Jazz, and Classical music for 3-4 hours daily. Participant C has musical training in Piano and voice lessons. In her demographic questionnaire, participant C indicated that she listens to music to music to concentrate, relax, get in a good mood and block out sound. Participant C also expressed during and before the interview that she has moved away from home to study for the first time and that her immediate family unit is musical. Participant C’s musical background and recent life transition can be used to interpret and understand her meaning-making processes. Participant C reflected on the experience of “It was very positive. I think that it helped me to realise what music does for me specifically and the impact that it has on how I perceive things. It was generally positive because it helped me to reflect on my own experience of listening to music that you don’t always think about”. Like participants A and B, participant C found the reflective element of the study DES phase insightful and novel. This could be due to the fact that participant C studies psychology and enjoys the process of reflecting upon her emotions and experiences. She also comes from a musical background and family, so was probably encouraged to appreciate the value of music generally.

Music for Entertainment

Participant C expressed her belief that music is something that can be listened to different situations and can be a way to mitigate boredom and be a source of entertainment . Participant C stated: “If I cannot take out my phone or read something, listening to music gives me something to do”. As participant C is a student, she must commute from her accommodation to campus. As music is easily accessible, and something that she can easily rely on for entertainment as she was raised to do by her parents and sibling who are musically inclined.

Music Genres Being Important

Participant C explained that different genres of music can have an emotional impact on people that can be anticipated or unanticipated. Participant C said: “People should appreciate more types of music. Many people just listen to one genre. I experience a whole spectrum of emotions. Different genres help for different things. Sometimes, even things that you would not expect”. Participant C believes that impact of music is diverse and that is important to listen to different genres to experience the different impacts of music. Chloe not only expressed that she has musical training, but also that her parents appreciate music. These contextual factors might explain why participant C appreciates and understands the diverse emotional impact listening to music can have on people.

Music as Escapism

Participant C stated that she believes that music can be very useful to be listened to when she feels overstimulated and block out certain things that are overstimulating her or making her feel overwhelmed. Participant C said: “In some instances, I can get very overstimulated by everything around me. Music just helps to shut that down” participant C.

Music Changing Emotional Valence

Participant C stated that the most significant aspects of the specific experiences of listening to music were the roles that listening to music played in her life. As someone who is enjoys listening to music and values it due to her musical household, this is not surprising as participant C was able to value that music is important and how it meaningfully impacted her emotions. Participant C like has a general propensity to reflect upon her emotions due to studying psychology. Participant C stated: “I remember the one instance was the calming effect it had on me. We had a very stressful week. We had a lot of deadlines and tests coming up. I realised that I was starting to feel really overwhelmed….,It really relaxed me and not really reach the point of a panic or anxiety attack” .

Listening to Music for Motivation

Participant C expressed that she had listened to music for motivation. Participant C said: “I had some household chores to do. I had dishes to wash and laundry to do. It was stuff that had to be done. The music I listened to was a mixture of rock and worship music. It really just motivated me to stand up and do the things”. Participant C stated before and during her interview that she has recently transitioned from living with her parents and siblings to living on her own in student accommodation. She mentioned before her interview that her parents were great sources of support to help her feel motivated, but she now seeks that motivation from external sources like music or her peers.

Negative Musical Messaging

Participant C stated that she believes that although listening to music “has generally been positive” and that listening to music is something that she “enjoy(s) personally”, doing in her “family context and with friends” but that she just finds it negative when the lyrics that she listens to do not coincide with her Christian values. Participant C said: “I don’t want to

hear the swear words and negative things that they speak about in music. It really aggravates me and just grosses me out completely. At times, it is hard to get away from". Participant C expressed that in this way uses music not only to affirm the values that she already has, but understand the things and musical messaging that does not correspond or coincide with these values.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant C expressed hat what has surprised her about the specific experiences of listening to music is how frequent they are. Participant C stated: "These experiences have been pretty similar to experiences in the past. I would say that the only difference is that I use it more. I need to listen to music more. University is rough and I am a long way from home. That adds extra stress. I have to care for myself completely. I still have support, but it is harder, and I know tend to use music more to reassure me and calm me. It is the same as the past but intensified". Often, changes in life circumstances or environment require a lot of emotional regulation to cope with. With more academic demands being placed on participant C than in High School and a change in living arrangement, it is understandable that participant C would need to listen to music more to regulate her emotions.

Music Changing Emotional Intensity and Enhancing Emotional Awareness

Participant C stated that she finds that music can be linked to her emotions and a means to facilitate emotional regulation. Participant C expressed that she finds that listening to emotions can intensify her emotions. Participant C explained: "When you are angry or sad, you listen to music that has that emotion in it, and it tends to intensify those types of emotions a lot. If you are feeling happy, you listen to happy music overall to intensify the feeling" . Chloe also expressed that listening to music can sometimes allow her to understand and think intensely which emotions she is feeling as it can be a way to "single out an

emotion". Participant C finally expressed that music can have the ability to "create new emotions" such as "(a)nger or sadness". Listening to music can also distract participant C from the negative emotions that she is feeling or when feelings of stress are overwhelming. Participant C wrote in her reflection that listening to music took her "mind off the stress of tests and exams". Participant C did express before her interview that she is prone to experiences stress and anxiety, so it is understandable that she would require music to enhance desirable emotions such as a happiness and calmness and would want to avoid undesirable emotions such as anxiety and stress.

The Religious Function of Listening to Music

Participant C repeatedly mentioned that she listens to "worship music" to "cement (her) faith", remind her of her values and reassure her that that "everything will be ok in the end" in times of uncertainty. Participant C outlined that she was raised in a Christian household and that Christianity forms a big aspect of her identity and who she is.

Music for Entertainment

Participant C expressed that she finds that music can help her to concentrate and "focus on the single thing" that she is doing at any given time and can even make mundane tasks "more fun" when she is feeling unmotivated and "not feeling" like doing things like "housechores". Participant C expressed that she specifically listening to classical music to focus. Participant C said that she can put a classical musical track on and feel "motivated to do work".

Music for Coping

Participant C expressed that listening to music helps her understand that she is feeling stressed but regulate these emotions sufficiently to be able to concentrate on the task that is causing stress. Participant C reflected upon upcoming tests and assignments being "a huge

stresspoint". Participant C expressed: "When I am studying, I listen to music without lyrics, but there are a lot of great study sounds and music tracks. That is really one thing that it can help with. When you are stressed about the amount of work you have to do, it is difficult to sit down and do it". Participant C noted an important aspect about coping with her academic workload. One of the things that makes it difficult for students to start academic work is ruminating on their big workloads. Musical lyrics perhaps stimulate thought and ideas. In this way, musical lyrics might encourage rumination.

Participant C does not believe that musical lyrics necessarily provide her with solutions to stressful problems she might be experiencing but affirms her values and helps her to understand that most problems have solutions. Participant C said that although song lyrics do not necessarily contain the exact solutions to problems she might be experiencing, she does find that musical lyrics remind her of her values and things she deems important. Participant C expressed: "Sometimes, when things are going rough, I listen to worship music to cement my faith and what I know. Even if it is something I already know, it just lets me know that everything will be ok in the end".

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1. Music genres being important 2. Music changing emotional valence 3.Negative musical messaging 4.The changes in the experiences of listening to music 5. Music changing emotional intensity and enhancing emotional awareness	1."People should appreciate more types of music. Many people just listen to one genre. I experience a whole spectrum of emotions. Different genres help for different things. Sometimes, even things that you would not expect". 2. "I remember the one instance was the calming effect it had on me. We had a very stressful week. We had a lot of deadlines and tests coming up. I realised that I was starting to feel really overwhelmed….,It really relaxed me and

	not really reach the point of a panic or anxiety attack" . 3. "I don't want to hear the swear words and negative things that they speak about in music. It really aggravates me and just grosses me out completely. At times, it is hard to get away from". 4. "These experiences have been pretty similar to experiences in the past. I would say that the only difference is that I use it more. I need to listen to music more. University is rough and I am a long way from home. That adds extra stress. I have to care for myself completely. I still have support, but it is harder, and I know tend to use music more to reassure me and calm me. It is the same as the past but intensified". 5. "When you are angry or sad, you listen to music that has that emotion in it, and it tends to intensify those types of emotions a lot. If you are feeling happy, you listen to happy music overall to intensify the feeling" .
THEME 2: THE FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music for entertainment 2.Music for motivation 3.The religious aspect of listening to music 4.Music for coping	1."If I cannot take out my phone or read something, listening to music gives me something to do". 2. "I had some household chores to do. I had dishes to wash and laundry to do. It was stuff that had to be done. The music I listened to was a mixture of rock and worship music. It really just motivated me to stand up and do the things". 3. "cement my faith". 4. "When I am studying, I listen to music without lyrics, but there are a lot of great study sounds and music tracks. That is really one thing that it can help with. When you are stressed about the amount

	of work you have to do, it is difficult to sit down and do it".

Participant D

Participant D is a twenty-four-year-old female, and her home language is English. She loves to listen to rock, Jazz, Classical, and heavy metal music. Participant D listens to music daily for more than 6 hours and has musical training in guitar. Before the interview, participant D mentioned that she is a post graduate psychology student. Participant D's academic background, and musical training could be factors that can be used to understand her meaning-making processes. Participant D enjoyed participating in the study as she was prompted to reflect upon her experiences of listening to music. Participant D said: " I really had to think about my experiences whilst listening to music. It's something that I don't think about consciously and it was good" .

Musical Messaging

Crista expressed that she believes that she is very selective about the messaging in musical lyrics that she allows herself to internalise. Participant D described: "I'm also very careful with the lyrics that I choose to listen to. Especially with metal. It's sometimes angry and there is a lot of death imagery….. I won't listen to music about terrible lives and not having friends. I understand that it might cause problems that I don't have through a mantra". Participant D described in her interview that she is generally anxious in social situations. It is possible that Participant D does not want to internalise negative messaging from music as she does not want to worsen anxiety. The intentional nature that participant D chooses the musical messaging she internalises is similar to me.

Music for Focus

Participant D described that she believes that instrumental music or music in a language that she does not understand can have the impact of allowing her to focus. Participant D explained: “When I was listening to music whilst I was writing my reflections, the music would be instrumental or in a completely different language. This made me not struggle to think”. Participant D mentioned in her interview that she suspects that she is neurodivergent. Being neurodivergent is often associated with struggling to concentrate, so it is understandable that participant D does want to listen to music to allow her to feel focused.

The Predictable Nature of Listening to Music

Participant D said that she was aware of how routine listening to music is in her life. Participant D said: “In the past, I would listen to music based on my moods or what I needed in a moment. It was second nature to do that… I was more aware of the fact that there was a routine to how I listen to genre” . What participant D expects music to facilitate is dependent on how she feels whilst she is listening to it. Participant D’s experiences of listening to music are predictable and routine. This could be explained by participant D’s appreciation of music generally.

Music as Escapism

Participant D said that she has had many experiences of listening to music throughout her life. Crista said: “I think that I have always known that music is just a way that I zone out and escape from the world. I’ve always kind of known that….. I’ve actually realised that music is a soundtrack to a lot of what I do. I’ve just never realised how extreme it was”. Participant D’s experience of anxiety in social situations might explain why she listens to music. Participant D might want to distract herself and “escape from the world” and the negative emotions that she experiences in those situations. Participant D’s understanding that

she listens to music frequently was facilitated through the reflective component of the study. It is understandable that participant D's frequently listens to music, as before her interview she expressed that her parents have always encouraged her to listen to music.

In two of her reflections, participant D described that listening to music helps evoke memories from her past. On one occasion, participant D stated that she was listening to music that was "nostalgic and alternative" and on a second occasion expressed that music made her "feel nostalgic". Participant D stated before her interview that she enjoys reflecting on past memories and that it is a source of emotional comfort. When participant D experiences undesirable emotions, it is understandable that she listens to music as a source of comfort.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant D expressed that listening to music links to her emotions as "It helps (her) manage (her) emotions". Participant D expressed that this is the case when she driving. Crista described: "I hate driving. I especially hate driving to new places. It's anxiety inducing for me. I will sing when I'm driving. That helps a lot. That calms me down. I also have trouble verbalising how I'm feeling and recognising my emotions……My mom's told me that I have a hard time recognising my emotions. That can be linked to ADHD or Autism. Music helps me to identify the emotions that I'm listening to. Also give words to what I'm feeling. If I'm upset, I notice that I keep listening to one song that's about being upset. The lyrics almost align with what I'm feeling and going through". Participant D desiring emotional awareness and regulation is understandable as trouble with emotional recognition and regulation are common in individual who are diagnosed with neurodivergent psychopathology such as ADHD or Autism Spectrum Disorder. Another significant aspect of what Participant D expressed that music has to reflect the emotions that she is experiencing. Music has to have emotional resonance and be emotionally relatable to participant D to be meaningful.

Music for Coping

In one of her reflections, participant D stated that she feels that listening to music can help her to identify feelings of stress and anxiety that arise due to academic tasks and manage them by changing them. Participant D expressed: "I was listening to a new album by one of my favourite artists at the moment, so I was somewhat calm. Somewhat because I have a presentation due in a few hours and this artist calms me down a lot. Listening to music helps participant D to put her emotions into perspective and not become overwhelmed by them. Participant D expressed before her interview that she has to do many academic tasks, so she has to prevent becoming emotionally overwhelmed by feelings of stress.

Participant D expressed that she feels certain songs reflect specific problems and relationships of hers. Participant D said: "I have a very big imagination. I like music that has a lot of fantasy imagery in it. That makes me excited. I know that I'm almost twenty-five, but I still imagine scenarios when I listen to music. I just started seeing someone. I like them a lot, so whenever I think of them, I think of love songs that are not about grandiose expression but these small expressions of love. Like "Oh! I did this!" and very small details. I think that is how I express my love to them. Very small expressions of love and looking at their actions that make me feel more sensitive". Specifically, participant D has used a song to help her to know how to express her femininity. Participant D said: In Lakes of Jupiter by Juno, she talks about being more feminine. I think that is also an experience that I'm having now with the guy that I'm seeing". Music can reflect or help participant D understand the emotional content of her relationships.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1. The messaging of music	1."It's sometimes angry and there is a lot of death imagery….. I won't listen to

2. The predictable nature of listening to music	music about terrible lives and not having friends. I understand that it might cause problems that I don't have through a mantra". 2. "In the past, I would listen to music based on my moods or what I needed in a moment. It was second nature to do that… I was more aware of the fact that there was a routine to how I listen to genre".
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music for focus 2.Music as escapism 3.Music for emotional regulation 4.Music for coping	1. "When I was listening to music whilst I was writing my reflections, the music would be instrumental or in a completely different language. This made me not struggle to think". 2. "I think that I have always known that music is just a way that I zone out and escape from the world. I've always kind of known that….. I've actually realised that music is a soundtrack to a lot of what I do. I've just never realised how extreme it was" . 3. "I hate driving. I especially hate driving to new places. It's anxiety inducing for me. I will sing when I'm driving. That helps a lot. That calms me down. I also have trouble verbalising how I'm feeling and recognising my emotions……My mom's told me that I have a hard time recognising my emotions. That can be linked to ADHD or Autism. Music helps me to identify the emotions that I'm listening to. Also give words to what I'm feeling. If I'm upset, I notice that I keep listening to one song that's about being upset. The lyrics almost align with what I'm feeling and going through". 4. "I hate driving. I especially hate driving to new places. It's anxiety inducing for me. I will sing when I'm

	driving. That helps a lot. That calms me down. I also have trouble verbalising how I'm feeling and recognising my emotions……My mom's told me that I have a hard time recognising my emotions. That can be linked to ADHD or Autism. Music helps me to identify the emotions that I'm listening to. Also give words to what I'm feeling. If I'm upset, I notice that I keep listening to one song that's about being upset. The lyrics almost align with what I'm feeling and going through".

Participant E

Participant E is a twenty-year-old female whose home language is English. Participant E loves to listen to Hip hop, Jazz, and Classical music. Participant E listens to music daily for 1-2 hours daily and has no musical training. In her demographic questionnaire, participant E said that she listens to music to concentrate, relax, get in a good mood, block out sounds and cope with her emotions. Participant E found the process of participating in the study enjoyable. Lesley said: "It was interesting. I had to think about my answers, and I find that I would think deeply about music and how I experienced whenever I would answer the questions".

The Universal Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant E stated that she believes that music is "a powerful tool" and "a medium for everything" that "can facilitate change and expression in people". Participant D expressed in her interview that she comes from a family that appreciates music. It is therefore understandable that participant E understands the importance of music and how beneficial it can be to listen to music. .

Participant E also expressed that music is something that is universal and can transcend the differences between people. Participant E said: "I believe that music is a

medium that brings all people together despite differences. It's one type of common denominator that we all share and there is a form that will keep you motivated ". Participant E expressed before her interview that she has lived in South Africa her entire life and does have family members from different cultural backgrounds to her. This could explain why she appreciates that music is part of different cultures and is culturally specific.

Finally, participant E further expressed that she believes that music is a positive entity in a "society that is very negative". Participant E believes that listening to music is an activity that can bring up positive emotions in a negative societal context. South Africa is a country associated with psychosocial issues that could be perceived by participant E to be associated with negative emotions.

The Cultural Aspect of Music

Participant E stated that listening to music has been culturally specific in her context. Participant E said: "I grew up in a mixed household with different cultures. Music has always allowed me to feel close to both sides of my family and feel closer to my culture. It's drawn me back to my roots, the principles that I was raised with. I associate music with a lot of things in my life" . Participant E stated before her interview that she has had to do things to remind her of the principles she was raised on. This could be because participant D is living away from her childhood and independently for the first time.

Music as Abstract

Participant E also expressed that she finds her experiences of listening to music to "be something abstract". Despite this, participant E was surprised by the fact that she when reflection on specific experiences of listening to music, that she had the words to describe her experiences. Participant E explained: "The fact that I was thinking about what I was experiencing and wanting to put words to it was surprising to me. Music is a sort of entity,

and I normally do not have the words to describe it because it is a sensation. Feeling compelled to do so was surprising to me". Music being difficult to describe according to participant E is as a result of the emotional impact of listening to music is somatic to her.

Music Being Distracting

Participant e did reflect that one of the experiences of listening to music was not positive as it was "disrupting (her) relaxed state of mind". Participant E does not just perceive listening to music to just be positive. Participant E described that she finds that music can distract herself from desirable music such as relaxation.

Music for Focus

Participant E expressed that listening to music can keep her "in the zone" and help her to focus. Participant E said that she believes that listening to music help her "maintain her focus" as in one of her reflections she stated that listening to music can help participant D not get distracted from "background noise". The discrepancy between music facilitating distracting or concentration is noteworthy as the impact of listening to music depends on the context in which it is listened to.

Music Changing Emotional Intensity

Participant E expressed that listening to music can intensify her emotions. Participant D expressed: If I am feeling that I am in an emotional space, and I want music to reflect what I am feeling, music can amplify that". Participant E already has to have the desire to reflect on music for listening to music to intensify her emotions.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POSITIVE	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The universal aspect of listening to music 2. The cultural aspect of music 3. Music as abstract	1.“ I believe that music is a medium that brings all people together despite differences. It’s one type of common denominator that we all share and there is a form that will keep you motivated ”. 2. “I grew up in a mixed household with different cultures. Music has always allowed me to feel close to both sides of my family and feel closer to my culture. It’s drawn me back to my roots, the principles that I was raised with. I associate music with a lot of things in my life”. 3. “The fact that I was thinking about what I was experiencing and wanting to put words to it was surprising to me. Music is a sort of entity, and I normally do not have the words to describe it because it is a sensation. Feeling compelled to do so was surprising to me”.
THEME 2: THE FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music for focus 2.Music for emotional regulation	1. “over an extended period of time”. 2. “If I am feeling that I am in an emotional space, and I want music to reflect what I am feeling, music can amplify that” .

Participant E

Participant F is a twenty-two-year-old male whose home language is Afrikaans. Participant F loves listening to rock, Jazz, classical, trance Gospel, Reggae and Afrikaans music and has no musical training. Participant F indicated in his demographic questionnaire that he listens to music daily for 1-2 hours. In his demographic questionnaire, participant F indicated that he listens to music to concentrate, relax and get in a good mood. Participant F mentioned that he had a positive experience of participating in the study as he had always wanted to participate in one. Participant F said: " If I'm being honest, I have always wanted to be a participant in a study. When I saw that this opportunity existed, I grabbed the chance. I thoroughly enjoyed. The fact that I got to reflect on my experiences of listening to music made me think about how the music made me feel. Usually, the music I listen to is chosen based on what I'm in the mood I'm in when I listen to it. It was fun". Before his interview, participant F stated that he is an undergraduate student and that this is study was the first one that he had been a participate in. This was kept in mind by the researcher who described the process clearly and also asked participant F if he had any questions before the interview commenced.

Musical Expression

Participant F expressed that creating music can be "a form of expression and not just for the artists who make it" but that listening to music can be "a way of expressing ourselves" .Participant F also expressed that he believes that the impact that music "plays a big role" in peoples' lives based on the "type of music that (they) listen to". Participant F's belief that listening to music is a form of expression could have been influenced by the fact that he has listened to music in different social settings such as clubs and with family members. In this way, participant F has seen the different emotional impact that listening to music can have on different individuals

Listening to Music with Other Creative Activities

Participant F stated his belief that listening to music can be linked or associated with other forms of creative expressions such as singing and dancing. Participant F expressed: “I love to sing along even though I cannot sing to save my life” and “If you want to dance like nobody is looking, there is a type of music that you listen to, and it makes a difference”. Before the commencement of the interview, Participant F described that he was also encouraged in his family context to engage in creative forms of expression such as dancing and singing despite not having formal training to do so. Participant F also indicated that he is generally a sociable and extroverted individual and could possibly explain his confidence to accompany listening to music with other creative expressions like singing and dancing.

The Negative Aspects of Listening to Music

Participant F expressed that one of the things that irritates him about listening to music is when he listens to it at an inappropriate time. Participant F said: “The only thing that irritates me about that is that I follow a lot of the artists, and they don’t do day shows. I would really love day shows because I don’t like to be out at three or four in the morning listening to music” . Before his interview, participant F expressed that he is a busy student and must study during the evenings. This could explain why he does not enjoy listening to music late at night.

Participant F stated that he rarely has negative experiences of listening to music. Listening to music needs to meet certain expectations to be meaningful. Participant E explained: “I’ve never really had a negative experience of listening to music unless I’m listening to an artist’s new song and it’s not as banging as it should be”.

The Social Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant F also said that he feels as though experiences of listening to music are personal. Participant F said: “For me, it’s hard to explain. It’s this sense of euphoria. Even though you are on the dancefloor with friends, you just feel this connection with the sounds, the vibrations, the speakers. You have this connection with the DJ. You feel like they are playing for you”. As participant F mentioned before his interview that he believes that music is social, it is understandable that he also believes that experiences of listening to music are personal and social and can allow groups of people to feel the same emotions.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Although listening to music during the study have been typical. Participant F said that listening to music during the course of the study has been been “(n)ormal” and that his general experiences of listening to music have been “predominantly positive” , but that different musical genres and songs have been appealing to him at different points in his life. Participant E described that generally, his musical preferences changed. Participant F said: “When I got older and was in high school, the type of music that I would listen to defined me as a person. It was this rock and grunge person to show that I was this deep and dark person. That just changed into the more Afrikaans music where I could embrace the aspect of me that is Afrikaans and enjoying the Afrikaans music”. Before his interview, participant E said that he felt as though his musical preferences were influenced by his peers.

Music “ became a matter of music reflecting who I am versus what I like” . Participant E’s general experiences of listening to music have changed to reflect his identity and personality rather than just his musical preferences. The age at which this shift occurred is understandable as adolescence is a developmental period in which identity formation

occurs. Participant E has become proud and increasingly interested in his Afrikaans heritage as his identity has formed.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant F stated that he sometimes listens to music as a form of catharsis when he is sad and wants to feel happier. Participant E described: “There are certain artists and songs that make you feel sad. You sometimes crave a good cry. You know that certain songs will make you delve into your feelings”. Participant F’s desire for listening to music to be cathartic likely stems from the fact that he is a student and copes with academic. Him studying psychology has likely taught him to value being aware of his emotions. Participant F stated that listening to music can make his emotions feel more intense. Participant F said: “If I am feeling down and out, and I’m listening to music that is down and out, I’m going to feel more down and out. I cannot remember the specific quote, but someone once said that people are addicted to the feeling of sadness and that is why they listen to sad music. I feel that is true. There are certain artists and songs that make you feel sad. You sometimes crave a good cry. You know that certain songs will make you delve into your feelings. Before tests, if I am feeling stressed, I’ve got two go to songs. They are Two little birds and A-Ok. They just remind me not to be worried and be happy. This explanation further illustrates Participant E’s point that listening to music can help him to understand his emotions and engage in the academic tasks that he needs to despite feeling stressed.

Music for Coping

Participant F stated that he feels that listening to music can help him identify and better manage academic stress. Participant F explained: “If I am studying whilst I’m stressed, I will listen to classical music. There are certain points when I have to switch music off. It depends on what I’m doing. Sometimes music is not the answer, but it can be a coping

mechanism. Liam stated his belief that he needs to busy with a particular type of academic work to be able to use music to target his emotions or stress. Participant F said: “When I’m busy with intense or more theory-based work, I don’t tend to listen to music or listen to music without lyrics. When I’m busy with Physics, Maths or equations, I jam a lot. I would be singing along to Theuns Jordaan”. As the degree that participant F is enrolled in requires him to do science-based modules and a psychology one, the nature of the academic tasks he must do vary and some of them lend themselves to listening to music more than others.

Participant F expressed that people are programmed to look for their situations in the music lyrics that they listen to and can thus look for solutions to the problems that are causing them stress. Participant F said: “I am believer that people are programmed to look for patterns or signs. If there is a song that I’m listening to that is saying something about my specific situation, I will take it to heart. Lyrics have done that in the past”. Participant F indicating his belief that people predictably seek musical lyrics that align with their situations and problems could be explained by his training in psychology and understanding that there is predictability in how people develop, behave and perceive the world.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Musical expression 2. Listening to music with other creative activities 3. The social aspect of listening to music 4. The changes in the experiences of listening to music	1.“a way of expressing ourselves” 2. “The only thing that irritates me about that is that I follow a lot of the artists, and they don’t do day shows. I would really love day shows because I don’t like to be out at three or four in the morning listening to music”. 3. “For me, it’s hard to explain. It’s this sense of euphoria. Even though you are on the dancefloor with friends, you just feel this connection with the sounds, the vibrations, the speakers. You have this

	connection with the DJ. You feel like they are playing for you". 4. "When I got older and was in high school, the type of music that I would listen to defined me as a person. It was this rock and grunge person to show that I was this deep and dark person. That just changed into the more Afrikaans music where I could embrace the aspect of me that is Afrikaans and enjoying the Afrikaans music".
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music for emotional regulation 2. Music for coping	1."If I am feeling down and out, and I'm listening to music that is down and out, I'm going to feel more down and out. I cannot remember the specific quote, but someone once said that people are addicted to the feeling of sadness and that is why they listen to sad music. I feel that is true. There are certain artists and songs that make you feel sad. You sometimes crave a good cry. You know that certain songs will make you delve into your feelings. Before tests, if I am feeling stressed, I've got two go to songs. They are Two little birds and A-Ok. They just remind me not to be worried and be happy. 2. "When I'm busy with intense or more theory-based work, I don't tend to listen to music or listen to music without lyrics. When I'm busy with Physics, Maths or equations, I jam a lot. I would be singing along to Theuns Jordaan" .

Participant G

Participant G is a thirty-two-year-old female whose home language is Zulu and listens to music for 1-2 hours daily. Participant G loves to listen to Hip hop, Jazz, Classical, and Gospel music. In her demographic questionnaire, participant G indicated that she listens to music to relax and block out sound and has no musical training. Participant G is studying a Master's degree in psychology and living away from home in a student residence. Participant F described the experience of participating in the study as being easy and a reflection of what she would do anyway. When describing the experience of participating in the study, participant F said: "It was very positive because I am someone who mostly listens to music. There was nothing too hectic about it". This indicates that participant F was a suitable participant to participate in this study, as the DES reflections are intended to be reflections of the experiences that participants would have experienced irrespective of the contact received by the researcher.

Musical Messaging

Participant G expressed that she believes that music has the potential to positively influence people's lives, and that people can be "positively enhanced through listening to music".

Participant G described that she believes that it is important for music to have a "positive message behind it" for listening to music to play a positive role in her life. The use of the words "positively" and "positive" demonstrates that participant G does not want to listening to music to have a negative emotional impact on her.

Participant G expressed that she likes to music "before (she) sleep(s)" and after "a hectic day" as a way to calm her down. This demonstrates that participant F listens to music to experience desirable emotions.

Participant G described that she believes that experiences of listening to music can be linked to emotions if one is able to “open (themselves) up to the experience” and that it can be “amazing” to listen to music if one does so. Listening to music impacting emotions is something that participant F believes can occur if the people listening to the music are open to the experience.

The Changes in Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant F expressed that although “The motivational part (of listening to music) has always been applicable” to her general experiences of listening to music, but that “the emotional impact” that listening to music has had on her “has definitely been different from the past”. Participant G described that her experiences of listening to music in the past have been cathartic and allowed her to “cry and think of (her) problems”. Lately, participant G is a “happy soul and trying to remain positive and inspired” which is reflected through her experiences of listening to music. Remaining positive and having a positive outlook were things that participant G has prioritised as she has gotten older. The change from a negative to positive outlook is reflected in participant F’s music choices and preferences.

Listening to Music for Motivation

Participant G expressed that she feels that that she experienced a sensation that felt to her like a “motivation strikes that just happens in (her) body” when she experiences listening to music. The use of the word “strike” demonstrates that feeling motivation for participant F is a somatic experience. Participant G expressed that she feels motivated when she listens to music and “end(s) up executing whatever (she) need to execute because of what (she) experienced”. In her interview, participant G expressed that she aspires to start a business. She also expressed before her interview that she does have the ambition of furthering her studies.

Music Evoking Sadness

Participant G expressed that her experiences of listening to music have been predominantly positive "because the music that (she) listen(s) to is positively based". In a reflection, participant G said that the only way in which listening to music would be a negative experience would be if it "evoke(d) sadness" that she did not want to experience. This demonstrates that participant does not desire to experience emotions that make her feel negative. This aversion to experiencing negative emotions could be explained by events that have happened in participant G's past.

Music Changing Emotional Valance and Intensity

Listening to music to facilitate emotional regulation: Participant G said that some people close themselves off to the emotions that listening to music can elicit because listening to music might "evoke certain emotions that they don't want to feel at a particular time. Participant G expressed that if an individual seeks to experience positive emotions after experiencing negative emotions, listening to music "can change negative (emotions) to positive ones". Participant G expressed that she listens to music when she wants to block unmotivating or overstimulating surroundings. Participant G explained: "I mainly listen to music for external purposes. In the apartment that I stay in, there is a lot of noise. I sometimes need to clear the noise out which allows me to sleep at night". This was confirmed in two of participant F's reflections in which she said that listening to music allowed her to shut out "unnecessary external and unwanted noise " and in "easily fall asleep". Participant F stated before her interview that she finds that loud noises made by other people distract her from her work. As participant G does need to meet academic deadlines but lives in student accommodation, it is understandable that she would use music to distract her from external

stimuli that demotivate her or prevent her from doing work. I used music in a similar way when I lived in student accommodation as an undergraduate student.

Music for Coping

Participant G said that she feels that listening to music can allow her to identify negative feelings but have a "positive drive" to overcome them and "face the struggles that (she is) facing in a calm way". The sentiment that participant G expressed of wanting to face struggles calmly demonstrates a positive outlook that she has generally demonstrated. Mavis stated before her interview that she has experienced academic adversities that have caused her to experience many negative emotions. It is understandable that she would use music to identify what these undesirable emotions are and regulate them.

Participant G expressed that she feels that music makes her feels as though finding solutions to her problems "seemed possible" and that difficult problems that "didn't have an answer" did. Having the belief that stressful problems can be solved is a form of coping that aligns with participant G's positive outlook on life generally.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTNEING TO MUSIC BEING MENAINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Musical messaging 2.The changes in the experiences of listening to music 3.Music evoking sadness	1. "positive message behind it" 2. "the emotional impact has definitely been different from the past" 3. "unless it evok(ed) sadness " .
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Listening to music for motivation 2.Music changing emotional valence and intensity	1."motivation strikes that just happens in (her) body". 2. "I mainly listen to music for external purposes. In the apartment that I stay in,

3.Music for coping	there is a lot of noise. I sometimes need to clear the noise out which allows me to sleep at night". 3. "face the struggles that I am facing in a calm way".

Participant H

Participant H is a thirty-eight-year-old female who listens to hip-hop, jazz, Kwaito, House and Gospel music . Participant H indicated in her demographic questionnaire that she does not have musical training and listens to music daily for less than an hour to relax. She found the process of participating in the study to be clear, but finding it tiring to fill in the survey multiple times. Participant H said: "Because there was more than one survey, I did get a little fatigued. It was not difficult, but just because I had to do more than one survey" .

Impact of Listening to Music being Contextual

Participant H said that she believes that the impact that music has on her can depend on the mood that she is already before listening to music. Participant H explained: "For me, it depends on my mood. It can lift my mood and zone out of a situation. If I've had a bad day at work, it can help me to zone out and go to a better place. It is like a mood regulator for me. It depends" . Participant H stated before her interview that she works and studies Psychology. It is understandable that she believes that music is contextual as she has likely listened to music in different contexts.

Musical Preferences being Familial

Participant H also expressed that different people have influenced her musical preferences. Participant H expressed: "I grew up listening to talk radio and jazz because that is what my dad listened to. Listening to new music was influenced by my cousin of mine" .

Participant H stated before her interview that she comes from a family that is very close, so it is understandable that her musical preferences were influenced by her family members.

Musical Experiences Being Predictable

Participant H expressed that she believes that she keeps all her experiences of listening to music similar to each other. Participant H expressed: "I can link all of it back to what he listened to. I'm not very experimental. There are people who listen to different genres. I generally listen to the same things over and over again" . This indicates that participant H enjoys music that is familiar to her. In her interview, participant H said that is "always a good thing" when you "get to choose what you listen to" . Participant H is autonomous in her decision to listen to new music.

Participant G described that the only times that she listened to new music was when people have recommended new songs to her. Participant H said: "I recently added something to my playlist because I was driving with someone. I thought that it was not too bad. It popped up in my Spotify". Participant H said that had it not been for the recommendation, she "would not have gone and actively looked for something different" and enjoys listening to the "same songs" . Participant H expressed during her interview that she trusts her friends. It is understandable that she would trust the musical preferences of her friends.

The Religious Function of Listening to Music

Listening to music as having a spiritual aspect: Participant H expressed that listening to music has a spiritual aspect to it. In one of her reflections, participant H described listening to Gospel music and "enjoy(ing) the lyrics" , "feeling connected to God" and "focusing on Him" . Participant H expressed that she has grown up in a religious household before her interview. Gospel music makes her feel connected to her spirituality and she enjoys and

values addressing this aspect of her life. It is not surprising that participant H uses Gospel music for a religious purpose.

Music as Entertainment

Participant H expressed that she listens to music as a form of entertainment on long drives to help her "stay entertained en route". Participant H started in her interview that she finds that if she is not listening to music on roadtrips that she be engrossed in her thoughts and entertainment for her requires her to disconnect from her thoughts and "all that was happening in (her) head" .

Music Changing Emotional Valence and Intensity

Participant H also expressed that she seeks listening to music when she "want(s) to be a better mood" , when she is "down" and wants music to "lift (her) mood" and emotions to be more positive. Participant H expressed: "If I am down, and listen to music, I will be in a much better mood and stay there. I am not generally one to always express my feelings, but I will generally be in a better mood". Participant H expressed that although listening to music does not make her emotions more intense, it will have a "calming effect". Participant H expressed before her interview that she finds it difficult to do academic tasks when she feels stressed. It is understandable that given both the academic and professional demands placed on her, that it is useful for her to listen to music to change her emotional valence and intensity.

Music for Coping

Participant H expressed that listening to music can facilitate coping as it can help her to identify her feelings of stress and overwhelm to be able to put her emotions in perspective and neutralise what she is feeling. Participant H described: "It brings me back to earth or neutralises whatever the situation would have been". Participant H uses music to identify and neutralise the stress she might be feeling.

Participant H expressed that she does not listen to music during times of stress as "a solution driven exercise" but rather just "to regulate (her) mood". Before her interview, participant H expressed that she relies on her peers and colleagues to provide her with solutions to problems. It is possible that participant H does not find listening to music a useful way to receive solutions to her problems due to having other means to find solutions to problems causing undesirable emotions.

Music not as Escapism

Participant H expressed that she does not listen to music to recall memories or times in her life as she is sociable and more inclined to talk to the people around her when she listening to music. Participant H said: "I do not really use music to reminisce or think back. I'm generally a talkative person. If I'm around other people and there is music playing, I would not really remember the song. I am more of a social butterfly". Participant H stated before her interview that she was encouraged by her father to be social, so she is so engaged in social interactions that she does not remember music playing in the background of social interactions.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Impact of listening to music being contextual 2. Musical preferences being familial 3. Musical preferences being predictable 5. Music changing emotional valence and intensity 6.Music not as escapism	1. "For me, it depends on my mood. It can lift my mood and zone out of a situation. If I've had a bad day at work, it can help me to zone out and go to a better place. It is like a mood regulator for me. It depends". 2. "I grew up listening to talk radio and jazz because that is what my dad listened to. Listening to new music was influenced by my cousin of mine" . 3. "I can link all of it back to what he listened to. I'm not very experimental.

	There are people who listen to different genres. I generally listen to the same things over and over again" . 4. "calming effect". 5. "I do not really use music to reminisce or think back. I'm generally a talkative person. If I'm around other people and there is music playing, I would not really remember the song. I am more of a social butterfly".
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The religious function of listening to music 2.Music for entertainment 3.Music for coping	1."feeling connected to God". 2."stay entertained en route". 3. "It brings me back to earth or neutralises whatever the situation would have been"

Participant J

Participant J is a twenty-four-year old female who likes listening to Jazz, Classical music, Gospel and R&B and speaks Sotho as her home language . Participant H does not have any formal musical training. The first time she was contacted, participant H reflected on a recent experience of listening to music after 3 hours to 3 hours and 59 minutes after being contacted. The second time participant H was contacted, she was listening to music and completed the survey 30 to 59 minutes after being contacted. The third time participant H was contacted, she did not have a recent experience of listening to music to reflect on and was not listening to music when contacted either. Participant J enjoyed the experience of participating in the study and it was "nice" as it got her "to reflect on the type of music that (she) listen(s) to" . Participant J said that although she does speak about music to other people, she "never reflect on (her) emotions on it".

The Universal Nature of Music

Participant J stated that she believes that the positive impact of listening to music can be applicable to all ages and has universal functionality. Participant J explained: “I thought that I just put on a track, and she went quiet. If anything, I learnt something. I learnt that babies can respond to lyrics. I saw her legs moving. My mind was blown”. Participant J stated that she comes from a large family before her interview. Her family members are of different ages, so it is understandable that she saw the impact of listening to music on people of different ages.

Participant J further expressed that she is interested if the impact of listening to music can be experienced by unconscious individuals. Participant J said: “I’m interested in is what music can do to people who are unconscious. I remember that I saw this movie. I forget the name of it. This girl was in a comma and her boyfriend or friend used to play music to her whilst she was unconscious. I’m wondering if she could hear the music. Could it mean anything to you and make you conscious again if you are unconscious?”. Participant J mentioned before her interview that she is particularly interested in the topic area of consciousness, so it is not surprising that the link between consciousness and listening to music is of interest to her.

Music for Entertainment

Participant J mentioned that she listens to music when doing mundane tasks. “I also listen to music when I’m cleaning. It gets me out of my lazy mode. Honestly. When I want to get done with tasks at home, be it washing dishes or doing laundry, I will also put some music on”. Participant J mentioned before her interview that she was always encouraged by her parents to do chores from a young age, and she does not find doing chores enjoyable.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant J expressed that her experiences of listening to music encompass different genres than in the past. Participant J said: “My mom used to listen to jazz. I didn’t like it as I child. I’m not going to lie. I didn’t understand it. I only wanted to listen with something that has a beat. When I was thinking about my mom, I would think “oh! Let me listen to Jazz or Soul”. She loves this song Reindeer….. Yeah. I would listen to a lot of Gospel! I listen to Gospel a lot. I just listen to Gospel without any particular reason. I would just wake up and think “oh! I feel like Gospel” and I would play the Gospel” . Participant J’s description of her relationship with music demonstrates that she listens to music more intentionally than before. Participant J stated before her interview that she lives in student accommodation away from her family home. It is not surprising that Participant J wants to listen to music to remind her of certain family memories.

Music as Escapism

Participant J expressed that listening to music can remind her of certain people and memories. Participant J explained: “Sometimes, I would be reflecting on my childhood memories”. Before her interview, Participant H mentioned that she enjoys reflecting on memories from her childhood as it is comforting to do so.

Music for Focus

Participant J reflected that she was listening to music “whilst working” that did not “shift (her) concentration”. As a student, participant J likely values concentration and being productive as she has to focus to experience.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant J described that she sometimes listens to music when seeking to feel positive emotions. Participant J said: "(W)hen I'm feeling a little bit sad, I will listen to music. Me being sad will be the reason that I listen to music". Participant J expressed that she sometimes listens to music to be able to think about her emotions and for the music to "validate what (she is) feeling". Participant J said that she sometimes listen to music to be able to "tap out" and distract herself from the emotions that she is feeling. Participant J also said that she listens to songs when she wants "look for songs that link to the types of emotions that (she is) feeling" and "make sense of why (she is) feeling more sad" . Before her interview, participant H said that she was encouraged to understand her emotions by her parents growing up and is studying Psychology. During her interview, participant J said that she finds it very important to acknowledge and express negative emotions when she feels them, but that music has to reflect what she is experiencing to be able to allow to her understand her emotions.

Music Changing Emotional Valence

Participant J stated that if she listens to a song that expressed emotions that she did not feel, that it can change her emotions completely. Participant J said: "For me, it's based on the lyrics. If the person mentioned things on the lyrics that I didn't think of, then I start thinking about it. I tend to change songs midway based on that. Based on the lyrics. I will go and look for different music that changes the atmosphere all together" . As Participant J is new experiencing things such living away from home, it is understandable that she is responsible for creating a desirable atmosphere in which she can experience desirable emotions. Participant J does not have her family to change the atmosphere of her living environment.

Music for Coping

Participant J expressed that although she does not "entirely rely on music for coping", she does believe that music has the ability to facilitate coping. Listening to music helps participant J feel as though her emotions are valid and "aware that it is normal to feel what (she is) feeling" and have an awareness of her emotions. Participant J expressed that she "listen(s) to a lot of Gospel" when she is stressed or going through a difficult situation. Participant J mentioned before her interview that she does have other forms of coping other than listening to music, so it understandable that although she finds musical a useful tool to facilitate coping, that it is not the only which in which she does so.

As listening to music facilitates coping and allows participant J to know that she is stressed, and she is thus able to "look for better ways to deal with the difficult situation or moment". She mentioned a specific moment of grief in which she found the solution to in musical lyrics. Participant J stated: "I remember that in 2019 or 2020 that I was going through a moment of grief. I used to listen to Beyonce's song Heaven couldn't wait for you. At first, when I was listening to it, I was feeling sad, and I thought the song would make feel better. When I listened to the meaning of the lyrics, I thought that although I lost the person, they are in a better place. That started making sense to me to accept the situation in a diligent manner. It was because of that song that I actually went to therapy. I thought that maybe it's time that I accept the situation and deal with it in a better manner. The lyrics changed my whole narrative and perspective. The lyrics changed everything for me". Participant J's perspective on the grief she experienced allowed her to seek therapy and seek a service that would provide her useful tools to manage her grief.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The universal nature of music 2. The changes in the experiences of listening to music 3. Music changing emotional valence	1. I thought that I just put on a track, and she went quiet. If anything, I learnt something. I learnt that babies can respond to lyrics. I saw her legs moving. My mind was blown". 2. "My mom used to listen to jazz. I didn't like it as I child. I'm not going to lie. I didn't understand it. I only wanted to listen with something that has a beat. When I was thinking about my mom, I would think "oh! Let me listen to Jazz or Soul". She loves this song Reindeer….. Yeah. I would listen to a lot of Gospel! I listen to Gospel a lot. I just listen to Gospel without any particular reason. I would just wake up and think "oh! I feel like Gospel" and I would play the Gospel". 3. "For me, it's based on the lyrics. If the person mentioned things on the lyrics that I didn't think of, then I start thinking about it. I tend to change songs midway based on that. Based on the lyrics. I will go and look for different music that changes the atmosphere all together".
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTNEING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music as entertainment 2. Music as escapism 3. Music for focus 4. Music for emotional regulation 5.Music for coping	1. "I also listen to music when I'm cleaning. It gets me out of my lazy mode. Honestly. When I want to get done with tasks at home, be it washing dishes or doing laundry, I will also put some music on". 2. "Sometimes, I would be reflecting on my childhood memories". 3. "whilst working" .

	4. “when I’m feeling a little bit sad, I will listen to music. Me being sad will be the reason that I listen to music” . 5. “I remember that in 2019 or 2020 that I was going through a moment of grief. I used to listen to Beyonce’s song Heaven couldn’t wait for you. At first, when I was listening to it, I was feeling sad, and I thought the song would make feel better. When I listened to the meaning of the lyrics, I thought that although I lost the person, they are in a better place. That started making sense to me to accept the situation in a diligent manner. It was because of that song that I actually went to therapy. I thought that maybe it’s time that I accept the situation and deal with it in a better manner. The lyrics changed my whole narrative and perspective. The lyrics changed everything for me” .

Participant K

Participant K is a twenty-two-year-old English-speaking female who enjoys listening to Rock music. In her demographic survey response, participant K said that she listens to music to concentrate, relax, get in a good mood, and block out sound. Participant K does not have musical training. When she contacted to complete the reflective survey on the first occasion, she completed it 4 hours after being contacted and reflected on a recent experience of listening to music. On the second occasion of being contacted, participant K indicated that she filled in the survey immediately and reflected on a recent experience of listening to music. On the third occasion of being contacted, she filled in the survey and was listening to music when contacted. Participant K indicated that she found that the experience of participating in the study “was interesting” and that the two phases of the study linked to each other and she was prepared “for what the study might be about before going to go into depth”.

Music Being Distracting

Participant K said that she experiences listening to music when she is on campus and in situations in which she knows that listening to music will not distract her . Participant K said: “I like to listen to music a lot of the time. I don’t like to listen to it when I am present with my family, but when I am in my room, cooking or doing an activity that I know music won’t distract me from I will put it on”. This sentiment was reinforced in one of participant K’s reflections in which she said that listening to music “can be distracting when (she needs) to do assignments”, especially those that require “critical thinking” on a “deeper level”. Participant K mentioned in her interview that she has not manage her own academic activities and tutoring other Psychology students. It is understandable that she does not want to listen to music when it could be distracting to do so, as she needs to concentrate to meet academic deadlines. Participant K indicated in her interview that she cannot fully predict when listening to music will distract her. It is perhaps this unpredictability that participant K finds unappealing. It is a noteworthy discrepancy that listening to music can facilitate concentration in some situations and be distracting in others.

The Changes in the Experiences of Listening to Music

Participant K reflected upon the fact that although her music preferences have changed over time, there are reoccurring themes that characterise the music that she listens to. Sall said: “Some people can listen to the same artist all the time but my music taste and experiences change every two years. I definitely have moments when I hyper fixate on stuff. I can fixate on artists. …. Looking back, I don’t think about that music with the same intensity as before. It represents a passage of time in my life. Even when I am listen to it now, it takes me back but doesn’t represent the person I am now”. Participant K’s change in musical

preferences reflect the different experiences she has gone through and emotions that she has felt.

Although participant K's experiences of listening to music have changed over time, she did express that the music she tends to listen have similar themes. Participant K elaborated on the common aspects of the experiences of listening to music that she has had. Sally said: "They do have something in common. All my recent experiences have something in common. There are some lyrical themes like hedonism or depression or emotionally intensity. There are definitely some gothic darkness. A lot of even Lana Del Ray's music has a dark or hedonistic dimension, so I think that there is a theme even though the music I listen to doesn't sound the same. If you think deeply, I would say that there is a thematic connection in the experiences".

Music for Focus

Participant K mentioned that listening to music in certain situations can help her to concentration especially if she does not understand the meaning of the lyrics. Participant K said: "A specific type of song or genre might help me focus. For example, I am Indian. I listen to a lot of Indian music and because I don't know what they are saying, I can't sing along. Not knowing the emotional connection and power that lyrics can stop me from getting distracted". Music without understandable lyrics to participant K do not allow her to do other musical activities like singing or dancing which is what distracts her when she listens to music. Before her interview, participant K did mention that she enjoys her Indian heritage, and that she associates listening to Indian music with pleasant emotions from her childhood. In one of her reflections participant K said: "I do usually like listening to music as it does help me concentrate, like at the library".

Music as Escapism

Participant K expressed that she feels that listening to music can make her remember things from her past. Participant K said: “Music is a bit of a time machine. It brings back certain memories and does help with memory recollection for me”. Participant K does live at home, so she is likely still exposed to her parents’ musical preferences in a similar way to when she was young. Moreover, participant K is in the same living environment as her family members. It is likely that being in the same living space as her parents also contributes to participant K remembering experiences from her childhood.

Music for Emotional Regulation

Participant K expressed that she does feel that music and her emotions are linked. Participant K stated that she does not feel that listening to music can “take away (her) negative emotions” and elaborated by saying that she cannot listen to “happy or fun music” when she is feeling negative emotions and “can’t really listen to music to music to feel better” when she is “already in a sad mood”. Music can “make (participant K) happier” when she is already feeling happy. Participant K said that she “does not necessarily like a distraction from said emotions” . Participant K explained: “I don’t mind feeling them. If I am on campus, I won’t because I know that I am in a public place, but if I am in my room and feel like I want to cry or overwhelmed I will listen to sad music that is more intense. That does help me. In some ways, listen to sad music when I feel sad instead of trying to change it helps more”. Participant K did mention before her interview that she has engaged in her own personal therapy. Therapy is often characterised by emotional recognition and awareness. It is not surprising that Sally wants to be aware of her emotions even if they are negative

Participant K stated that music needs to reflect what she is “already feeling” and that listening to music can give “ an outfit to a character” or accompany what she is “feeling or

going through" . In one of her reflections, participant K described that listening to music can distract her from negative emotions that she might be experiencing in a positive way. Sally said: "I sometimes get car anxiety and get distracted by my own thoughts, which tends to be exacerbated by driving. While I do like driving, I prefer music, as it helps me to drown the thoughts and helps me to become hyper focused on driving". Participant K tends to ruminate emotions of anxiety that she feels when she drives. In this situation, she does feel as though she needs music to distract her from the negative emotion.

Music for Coping

Participant K stated that she feels that many students use music to facilitate coping. To illustrate her point, participant K described her "friend who is doing her Honours in genetics" and "listens to music all the time". Participant K described that she believes that listening to music can bring awareness to emotions of stress and overwhelm without them becoming overly intense. Participant K stated: "You can put music on when you are stressed and find that you are just flying through a task. You can do them because you are listening to music instead of panicking or in a state of paralysis from stress". Music for participant K can facilitate coping with stress because she identifies undesirable emotions like anxiety and fear and not become overwhelmed by those emotions.

Participant K stated that she does listen to music to mirror feelings of angst that she is experiencing. Sally said: "When I do have a problem, I do like to listen to songs that discuss them. I listen to a lot of new metal. They are not talking about exactly what I am going through, but the angst is there and that is good enough. I like to listen to something that is a least a conduit for what you are feeling". Music has to relate to the emotions that participant K is experiencing for her come up with a solution to the stress that she is experiencing.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Listening to music in different contexts 2. The changes in experiences of listening to music	1."I like to listen to music a lot of the time. I don't like to listen to it when I am present with my family, but when I am in my room, cooking or doing an activity that I know music won't distract me from I will put it on". 2. "Some people can listen to the same artist all the time but my music taste and experiences change every two years. I definitely have moments when I hyper fixate on stuff. I can fixate on artists. …. Looking back, I don't think about that music with the same intensity as before. It represents a passage of time in my life. Even when I am listen to it now, it takes me back but doesn't represent the person I am now".
THEME 2: THE FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.Music being distracting 2.Music for focus 3. Music as escapism 4. Music for emotional regulation 5.Music for coping	1. "I like to listen to music a lot of the time… distract me from I will put it on . 2. "A specific type of song or genre might help me focus. For example, I am Indian. I listen to a lot of Indian music and because I don't know what they are saying, I can't sing along…". 3. "Music is a bit of a time machine. It brings back certain memories and does help with memory recollection for me" .

	4.“I don’t mind feeling them. If I am on campus, I won’t because I know that I am in a public place, but if I am in my room and feel like I want to cry or overwhelmed I will listen to sad music that is more intense. That does help me. In some ways, listen to sad music when I feel sad instead of trying to change it helps more” . 5. “You can put music on when you are stressed and find that you are just flying through a task. You can do them because you are listening to music instead of panicking or in a state of paralysis from stress”.

Participant L

Participant L is a 21-year-old Indian female who enjoys listening to Gospel music. Participant L indicated enjoying listening to music to aid her concentration, get in a good mood and to block out sound. Participant L expressed that the experience of participating in the study was a “positive one” and that “there wasn’t anything that was difficult or hard”.

The Universal Nature of Listening to Music

Participant L expressed her belief that music is fundamental in society and universal. Participant L said that she believes that "music has such a big role in the world that we live in today" and is "really fundamental" in her life. Participant L also said that she believes that "music is universal" and something that exists "all around the world". Participant L has lived in South Africa for her entire life, so it is understandable that she has had exposure to the different cultural backgrounds of the South Africans that she has encountered.

The Social Aspect of Listening to Music

Participant L also expressed that she believes that music plays an in important role at social gatherings and should be played "(a)t parties", as it would "be weird if there wasn't any music playing". Before her interview, participant L mentioned that her family is large and that they enjoy social activities. Given this, it is possible that participant L has been a part of so many social activities that she has been able to recognise which social activities are accompanied by music.

Participant L expressed that she believes that music can connect her "to feel close to the artist and people that [she does not] know" and that she can "connect with other people through music" even if she does know them. Participant L expressed that she "can share a song with [her] friend" and they can "listen to a playlist together and stuff like that". Participant L also expressed that music can help her to connect to her siblings as she reflected upon finding it beneficial to "share (new songs) with (her) siblings". Participant L is a university student, and stated that she is sociable by nature before her interview. She also indicated in her interview that she communicates and has discussion with her sibling. She finds value in understanding her siblings' perspectives and music can allow this.

Experiences of listening to music being typical

Participant L expressed that she felt as though the specific experiences of listening to music reflected her general experiences of listening to music. Participant L said: “It was pretty normal. They were normal experiences of listening to music recently” . Participant L mentioned before her interview that she finds listening to familiar musical lyrics helps her to feel calm. It is understandable that participant L actively strives to keep her musical experiences predictable to feel comforted and desirable emotions.

Musical Expression

Participant L stated that she believes that music facilitates self-expression and can be a mechanism that people can use to portray their beliefs. Participant L said: “People can use it to express themselves and get a message to other people to maybe feel the way that the way that they are feeling”. Participant L believes that music allows people to express themselves and in this way experience similar emotions.

The Religious Function of Listening to Music

Participant L expressed that she believes that music can allow her to focus on her spirituality and connecting with a higher power. Participant L said: “In Christianity, music plays a huge role in setting the atmosphere to get into the Lord’s presence in church and stuff like that. They play music first and then go into the service. It’s just to like focus our minds on a higher power”. Participant L mentioned before her interview that her religion is important to her and she grew up in a religious household. Participant L has been exposed to music during religious rituals and gatherings to be able to reflect on the fact that music allows her to focus on her relationship with a higher power.

Music for Emotional Regulation

In her reflection, participant L expressed that she seeks to listen to music that "matches her mood" and she will tend to skip songs until one does. Participant L expressed that she sometimes seeks to maintain certain positive emotions by listening to music. Participant L said: "I think that it's a way to maintain my emotions. To sit with my feelings. If I'm happy, it helps to maintain that feeling". Participant L also feels that listening to music can be useful when she seeks to understand and "relate" to what she is feeling. Participant L also expressed that music can be helpful to distract her from the emotion of boredom that she might be feeling as she will normally "sing along" to certain musical tracks and it can be a means to "fill up the quietness". In contrast, participant L also reflected upon using music to distract her from a lack of motivation that she might be feeling by blocking out "external noise" and allowing her to "focus on the work" that she is doing. Participant L feels that music can allow her to ruminate on emotions that she feels or maintain desirable emotions and distracts her from undesirable emotions.

Music for Coping

Participant L stated that listening to music allows her to acknowledge feelings of stress and anxiety but not become overwhelmed by them. Participant L said: "Sometimes, if I'm feeling really overwhelmed, I would step away from my laptop, put my headphones on and relax. Because I suffer with anxiety, I find that listening to music does help curb those feelings". Coping with undesirable emotions and stress requires her to change the valence of the negative emotions.

Participant L does not believe that listening to music cannot provide solutions to problems that she experiences that might cause her stressed. When asked if she tries to find

solutions to problems by listening to song lyrics, participant L answered by replying that she does not think "that's the case" for her. Participant L stated before her interview that having discussions with family members allows her to find solutions to problems that induce stress.

THEME 1: EXPERIENCES OF LISTENING TO MUSIC BEING MEANINGFUL WHEN POWERFUL	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The universal nature of listening to music 2. The social aspect of listening to music 3. Experiences of listening to music being typical	1."all around the world" . 2. "at parties, it would "be weird if there wasn't any music playing". 3. "It was pretty normal. They were normal experiences of listening to music recently".
THEME 2: THE MEANINGFUL FUNCTIONS OF LISTENING TO MUSIC	
Subordinate themes	**Appropriate quotes**
1.The religious function of listening to music 2.Musical expression 3.Music for emotional regulation 4.Music for coping	1.In Christianity, music plays a huge role in setting the atmosphere to get into the Lord's presence in church and stuff like that. They play music first and then go into the service. It's just to like focus our minds on a higher power". 2. "People can use it to express themselves and get a message to other people to maybe feel the way that the way that they are feeling". 3. "I think that it's a way to maintain my emotions. To sit with my feelings. If I'm happy, it helps to maintain that feeling" .

	4. “Sometimes, if I’m feeling really overwhelmed, I would step away from my laptop, put my headphones on and relax. Because I suffer with anxiety, I find that listening to music does help curb those feelings”.