Young People's Use and Subjective Experience of Music Outside School

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ABSTRACT

Few studies of everyday musical engagement have focused on the subjective 'feel' (phenomenology) of unfolding, lived experience. Additionally, the musical experiences of children and young adolescents are currently under-represented in the literature. This paper constitutes an in-progress report of the preliminary stage of a mixed method three year empirical enquiry, designed to explore psychological characteristics of the subjective experience of young people hearing music in everyday, 'real world' scenarios in the UK. The aims of the preliminary stage were to identify varied modes of listening, to pinpoint whether these are age-related, and to explore the extent to which young people use music as a form of escape (dissociation) from self, activity, or situation. 25 participants (aged 10-18) were interviewed and subsequently kept diaries of their music-listening experiences for two weeks. Data was subjected to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA). Key themes identified include the use of music to create a sense of momentum, energy and excitement in mundane scenarios, to dissociate or 'zone out' from aspects of self and/or situation, to feel relaxed, to feel 'connected', to articulate moods and emotions, to aid daydreams/imaginative fantasies and to provide a framework through which to explore emotions vicariously, using music as a template for modelling future emotional experience. Subjective experience was frequently characterized by a fusion of modalities.

Keywords: everyday life, subjective experience, music, young people, self-regulation

I.   INTRODUCTION

Understanding how young people listen to and engage with music outside the school classroom is an important and timely topic, due to radical changes to music listening wrought by new digital technologies which bring exclusion as well as inclusion, the changing provision and status of music education to young people in formal settings, new educational programmes which draw upon informal musical engagement in the classroom.

Crucially, although music is a ubiquitous presence in the lives of a high proportion of young people and music listening constitutes one of the most important leisure activities for this age group (e.g. North et al., 2000) there is an absence of detailed information about the beneficial and detrimental effects of young people's music listening practices and the phenomenology of young people's subjective experience.

Despite a burgeoning of scholarly interest over the last decade in the role of music in everyday life (see Clarke et al., 2010, Sloboda, 2010, for an overview), the 'real world' musical experiences of children and young adolescents continue to be severely under-represented, even though 'for many young people, music is key to how they orient themselves in their lives' (Macdonald et al. 2012: 6). Everyday musical practices

of young people have most commonly been studied separately from those of adults, meaning that literatures concerning these different age groups can appear relatively independent of each other - evident in their contrasting underlying concerns, the previous research they reference, and consequently the kinds of journals in which findings are disseminated.

Compared with studies of music listening in the everyday life of adults, where individuals' use and experience of music form the central focus (e.g. Sloboda et al., 2001; North et al., 2004; Hays & Minchiello, 2005; Juslin et al., 2008; Greasley & Lamont, 2011; Heye & Lamont, 2010), most inquiries relating to the experiences of children and adolescents have not focused primarily on the detailed exploration of individual subjective experience *per se*. Instead, they have been framed by research concerns regarding music education in school, including the issue of disjunction between young people's experiences of music in and outside school in the UK (Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001; Lamont et al., 2003; North et al., 2000), the development of musical competencies, the impact of music upon social and emotional development, spatial, language, reading skills (Hetland & Winner, 2004), the pluralistic nature of young people's culture (e.g. Lamont, 2008; Campbell, 2010), the value of informal 'enculturative' learning (North et al., 2000; North & Hargreaves, 2008: 338), the primacy of music listening as an adolescent leisure activity (e.g. North et al., 2000; Boal-Palheiros & Hargreaves, 2001; Lamont et al., 2003), age related differences in music listening (Hargreaves, 1982; LeBlanc et al., 1996), the influence of digital technology on music education (Finney & Burnard 2008) and upon listening practices (Campbell, 2010; Herbert, 2011; Lury, 2002).

A focal point of everyday music listening studies in general has been on function, i.e. music as self-regulatory resource, as opposed to the assembly of detailed accounts of the psychological qualities of unfolding, lived experience. The role of music in emotional regulation and mood management has been particularly emphasized. Much literature demonstrates an overtly nomothetic bias - seeking to establish common behavioural and personal tendencies across broad samples of young people.

Idiographically-based enquiries conveying a richer and more comprehensive view of the totality of experience are, to date, comparatively rare, despite the phenomenology (subjective experience) of music having been identified as a top priority for future research (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). The following studies have documented the characteristics of teenagers' subjective experiences of listening to music in some detail.

1. Saarikallio & Erkkilä's (2007) in depth study of the role of music in Finnish adolescents' (14 and 17 years of age) mood regulation, used a combination of semi-structured group interviews and open-response follow-up forms to tap subjective experience (although their published report drew principally on

the interview data). The authors observed that teenagers use of music did not appear to be consciously goal-specific (2007: 93), but did distinguish seven self-regulatory strategies: entertainment, revival, strong sensation, diversion, discharge, mental work and solace (2007: 96).

2. Finnäs (2006), drawing on earlier research concerning strong experiences of music (SEM) in adults (Gabrielsson & Lindström-Wik, 2003) has employed free descriptions in short essay format to study significant (taken to mean important, not necessarily intense) musical and non-musical aesthetic experiences of Fenno-Swedish adolescents (aged between 15 and 16). Music emerged as the most important 'art area' to afford significant experiences, (nature was the most important 'non-art area' (Finnäs, 2006: 315), although the method of classifying experiences by what was judged to be the dominant medium potentially underplayed the importance of significant multi-modal experiences.

3. Retrospective descriptions of adolescent SEM accounted for c. 25% of the total number of reports collected by Gabrielsson and Lindström-Wik between 1989 and 2004. Themes identified from analysis of teenage experiences included the impact of hearing new music, meeting idols and the use of 'music as consolation, support and therapy' (2011: 37).

4. The author's previous study (Herbert, 2009) of the phenomenology of everyday music listening (involving individuals aged between 15 and 85) included three teenage case studies, ranging in age from 15 to 18 years old. First-hand free descriptive reports of involving musical (and non-musical) experiences revealed that these teenagers frequently used music, consciously or unconsciously to dissociate from aspects of self, surroundings or activity, and that such experiences could possess a positive or negative valence. Additionally, a proportion of dissociative experiences appeared to be without either positive or negative valence, instead demonstrating a total sense of 'vacancy' or absence of sense of self (Herbert, 2011a,b; Herbert 2012; Herbert, forthcoming). Reports from the study also showed that the teenage participants frequently engaged in multimodal, absorbed listening, using music to 'soundtrack' surroundings or their own thoughts - including daydreams and self-reflection.

A slim body of literature concerning the musical experiences of pre-pubescent children exists. 10% of the retrospective reports of SEM collected by Gabrielsson and Lindstöm-Wik related to childhood experiences (up to the age of 13 years), some of which had occurred up to 60 years previously. Emergent themes included security/safety and closeness; absorption; strong experiences on special days (2011: 13). Saarikallio (2008) has explored the ways in which music may afford a means of emotional self-regulation for 3-8 year olds via a survey study conducted with the parents of 63 children. She identified four emotion-regulatory uses of music by this age-group: 'calming down', 'concentrated interest', 'happy energy' and 'fantasy imagery' (Saarikalio, 2008: 460). The children appeared to prefer upbeat, positive and rhythmic music. In a qualitative study of the musical lives of pre-pubescent children (from 3 to 12 years of age) Campbell (1998, updated 2010), influenced by Craft et al.'s landmark Music in Daily Life Project (1993), tapped the lived experiences of twenty children of varied socio-cultural backgrounds via semi-structured and open-ended interviews, non-participant observation and ethnographic descriptions of children's informal musicking in varied real-world settings. She observed that 'children's engagement in music frequently is paid minimal attention by teachers and parents' (2010: 5). This viewpoint has been echoed by Lamont (2008) who has called for future studies to examine experience 'from the child's perspective' (2008: 260).

A review of existing literature strongly suggests that detailed, idiographic analysis of the psychological processes involved in children and adolescents' music listening experiences (music as subjectively perceived), is an area ripe for development. Additionally, although literature indicates that the process of enculturation inevitably shapes and 'situates' music listening experiences, the detailed effects of specific cultural impacts upon young people's experiences have remained largely unexamined. There is a need to study the musical interactions of this age group in contexts outside formal education settings.

A. Current Research Aims

This paper focuses on the findings from the preliminary stage of a three year empirical inquiry. The overarching aim of the research (which runs until 2015) is to explore the psychological characteristics of the subjective experience of young people (aged between 10 and 18 years), hearing music in everyday, 'real world' contexts in the UK. The first two stages of the project are informed by the following research questions: 1. What is the nature of young people's subjective experience of music in the UK? 2. Do ways of experiencing music change during the transition from pre-pubescence to early and later adolescence? 3. To what extent do young people use music as a form of escape (the cognitive state of dissociation) from self, activity and situation? 4. What effect do digital music technologies have on the ways in which music is experienced? More specifically, are music experiences formed from 'byte'-size moments rather than album-length encounters? 5. Does a high level of involvement in making music affect the subjective experience of listening to music? The focus of the preliminary, exploratory stage of the research has been on the first three research questions.

II. METHOD

A. Participants

There were 14 female and 11 male participants, with a mean age of 13.7 years (ranging from 10 to 18). Level of musical involvement was ascertained by interview questions drawing on Greasley and Lamont's (2011) previous research regarding characteristics of high and low levels of engagement in music.

Individuals were asked to describe how important music was to them, how regularly they listened, whether music was self-chosen, how large their music collection was, how much they knew about self-chosen musics, and whether they encouraged others to listen to music they liked. They were also asked about their musical experience. All currently played musical instruments, 23 individuals attending regular instrumental lessons. Twelve participants were identified as demonstrating a high level of musical involvement.

B. Procedure and materials

Participants received a verbal description of the project, an introductory letter and an information and instructions sheet, prior to completion of informed written consent. Each individual completed a semi-structured interview c. 1 hour in length. Questions covered context, function and uses of music in daily life, tapping subjective experience via questions relating to activation (extent of engagement with environment), attention span (wide or narrow), attentional focus (external/internal), alterations of sensory awareness etc. Two different age-appropriate interview schedules were used, covering the same territory, but adapted to ensure questions were appropriate to and communicated clearly to children and older adolescents respectively. Interviews were recorded and fully transcribed. Circa three months after being interviewed participants recorded their music listening experiences in an unstructured diary for fourteen days. Prior to their negotiated start date, individuals were given a diary information and instructions sheet for use when compiling written reports. Instructions were almost identical to those used by the author in previous projects utilizing free phenomenological report (Herbert, 2009, 2011a, 2012). Both interviews and diaries were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a qualitative methodological approach with an idiographic emphasis which has gained popularity with researchers working in the multidisciplinary field of music, health and wellbeing (e.g. Pothoulaki, Macdonald and Flowers, in press).

III. RESULTS

A. Psychological Characteristics of Subjective Experience: Key Themes

Following analysis of individual interviews and diaries, cross-comparison highlighted eight superordinate thematic categories. These were *1. Momentum, energy and excitement, 2. Dissociation/ 'Zoning Out', 3. Relaxation, 4. Connectedness, 5. Articulation of Mood, 6. Daydreams/Imaginative Fantasies, 7. Vicarious Exploration of Emotion, 8. Multimedia Experience*. Each theme is summarized below, and prefaced by illustrative examples from reports and interviews. Themes are related to constructs from previous research, specifically i) the psychological mechanisms Juslin et al. (2010) have proposed as inducing emotions when listening to music; ii) regulatory strategies adopted by music listeners (Helsing et al. 2012; Saarikaalio and Erkkilä, 2007).

1) Momentum, Energy and Excitement

"Excitement is one of my main things with music. It might be that I'm just dead bored and want to get excited. I haven't really thought about it up until now" [Lily, 11]

"Sometimes I just go on the streets and walk up and down and listen... that's when I feel more buried into it [music] ... I feel I'm secure because it's just surrounding me and I am listening to it and it makes me feel happy. I'm still aware of cars and of things but only just ... I feel free and do anything I want (giggles)...run up and down the streets and turn around sometimes, shout to people. But I don't know what

I'm doing that for. I think it's just because the feeling of the music... is in my body and it makes me feel warmer and braver to do anything. Outdoor daydreams". [Martha, 11]

"The music [Asking Alexandria] hyped us all up - loads of energy and put us in a good mood, made me feel really happy with the way things were in my life, listening to good music surrounded by all your mates. We were just messing around and I was kissing my girlfriend" [Ozzy, 15]

"We have a Woodland near our house, so if the weather is nice enough I like to go out and listen to whatever is on, probably techno ...it just helps you enjoy the experience more 'cos you can blank out the silence I think. I don't like silence... I just find it unsettling...There is not much happening in these woods! You look at everything and ... I see life really. It is like an energized place. For example you see something rustling in the leaves maybe or trees blowing and you just... see everything moving". [Zak, 17]

The clearest intentional use of music across the age range was to create a sense of excitement, energy or momentum. Such episodes constituted one of the four most common types of experience for this sample. There is a clear overlap here with the regulatory strategy Saarikallio and Erkkilä term 'strong sensation' (2007: 98) plus reference to the psychological mechanisms of 'rhythmic entrainment' and 'emotional contagion' identified by Juslin et al. (2010: 625). Episodes could be solitary or social and inevitably involved movement, (of self and/or heightened perception of movement in surroundings). Experiences were marked by a high arousal sense of absorption (effortless attention), selective attentional awareness and relaxed critical faculty. Zak's experience of silence as 'unsettling' was echoed by many young people. Reports showed that music was often used as a means of customizing the subjective sense of time, determining the perceived temporal pace of experience and so confirming to the experiencer that they were part of a vital environment in which things were 'happening'. A common way of verbalising such experiences was to describe them in terms of feeling 'like the main character in a film' or of 'soundtracking life'. When describing situations in which music was absent participants talked of perceiving the environment as 'static', 'dead', 'empty', 'colourless' or 'black and white' and of feeling 'disconnected from what was going on'.

2) Dissociation/ 'Zoning Out'

"Standing at the station waiting for my friend, listening to my iPod [Maverick Sabre, 'Sometimes'] I was aware of almost everybody around me although they were meaningless to me. The music created a scene and, as I often do I began to daydream about the lives and journeys that these complete strangers were on... the music surrounds them and carries them away so quickly that in a second one person's face has already been lost and I am onto somebody else.... I watched as a smartly dressed woman bought her ticket and passed me, her face seemed deep in thought. And as I listened to a soul song with the lyrics "sometimes we go around and forget where we came from" I imagined these people so caught up in their own lives, so busy and always in a hurry that they don't notice the world as much anymore ...

standing there just listening to my music I realized I noticed the world and the people a lot more". [Phoebe, 16]

"I wasn't near the bus window so I just looked straight ahead of me down the bus aisle from the back, not really taking much in, and mainly just daydreaming about the day and weekend ahead. So, as usual my iPod was on shuffle - mainly listening to upbeat happy songs ... It almost feels like I'm not there and just in my own little thought bubble" [Alice, 16]

"Coming home from school I could at last listen to music and shut the thoughts and worries up. I get tired of what my mind does sometimes and just want to escape - vanish really... Things around me start to look a bit dreamlike - sort of looming in. Watch my reflection walking in a shop window as the blankness kicks in" [Sam, 14]

Free descriptions from the current study confirmed that young people's music listening experiences frequently possess a strongly dissociative element (demonstrating detachment from self, surroundings or activity). Dissociative episodes constituted another of the four most common types of experience for this sample. Nonpathological or normative dissociation is defined as 'an altered state of consciousness that is not organically induced, that does not occur as part of a dissociative disorder, and that involves the temporary alteration or separation of normally integrated mental processes in conscious awareness' (Butler and Palesh, 2004: 66). The regulatory strategy Saarikallio and Erkkilä label 'diversion' (2007:98) and two strategies 'suppression' and 'distraction by activity' proposed by Helsing et al (2012: 413-4) reference aspects of dissociation rather than the totality of the construct (e.g. the latter two strategies are taken to be negatively correlated with health, so focusing on manifestations of dissociation that are maladaptive rather than adaptive). Music was used most often to detach from external surroundings (as in the second extract above which features an inward attentional focus and imaginative involvement), and to a lesser extent from self (as in the third extract which is marked by a sense of both depersonalization and subsequent mild derealization). Although dissociation emerged as a primarily defensive strategy, occurring when individuals felt tired, stressed or emotionally overloaded, some episodes demonstrated a positive valence (as in the third extract) where an 'everyday' self was spontaneously replaced by an 'observing self' (Deikman, 1982) and a detached, yet refreshingly altered, absorbing perceptual relationship to surroundings.

3) Relaxation

"Because of school work I've done today and practical drama exams I just want to lie down and relax. I'm in that mood when I don't quite know what to do – I haven't got the energy to do something but I don't want to do nothing.… I listen to some minimalism acoustic guitar stuff [Steve Reich Electric Counterpoint III] that is really easy to listen to and just makes me feel relaxed really. I don't have to concentrate on anything and I can just do nothing and the music helps me to do that! Mind blanking, makes me feel separate from me

and just a place where I don't have to think and feel. Just be". [Betty, 16]

"In bed listening to 'Brothers' CD by 'The Black Keys ...it has a prominent drum beat and a recurring guitar pattern ...playing out loud from my phone. Much like counting sheep helps you to get to sleep, listening to the lyrics does the same for me ...I like to expand the lyrics into a visual representation" [Jack, 14]

"I've had places I go with my mind from when I first got my iPod, which was five years ago... Listening to contemporary classical music [Einaudi] kind of takes me off into a different place where I don't think about homework - a calming place. My calming place is actually in my tree in my garden. As a child I used to play around it and create a den. When I listen to music I see a vision of the tree and I'm just kind of there. It's really cosy and I feel secure and safe. And it's quite a good thing to have when there are lots of things happening. You can escape reality. When people ask me a question they like have to click and clap in front of me. I'm somewhere different. I have a very strong imagination. It's my den or it's my room and I'm in front of my dolls house where I used to play with my Sylvanians - and I used to spend hours and hours creating stories ... and I kind of go there. I'm not watching myself play, it's actually me there with them and the music". [Mei, 14]

Relaxation equates to Saarikalio and Erkkilä's regulatory strategy 'revival' (2007: 97). Music was most commonly used in this way as a means of helping individuals to get to sleep at night by blocking out external sounds or internal rumination. Experiences demonstrated a narrowed attentional focus either on acoustic attributes or associations/memories (referencing three of the psychological mechanisms proposed by Juslin et al.: 'brain stem reflex', 'visual imagery' and 'episodic memory' (210: 625)), so facilitating a transition into a hypnagogic state (half-way between wakefulness and sleep). Daytime relaxation music listening episodes tended to possess a dissociative emphasis, evident in the first and third extracts above. In the first, Betty's one-pointed selective attentional focus on music facilitates a reduction of thought, welcome release from emotion and temporary dissociation from self ('blanking'). The third indicates that Mei has developed an established practice of detaching from surroundings and current concerns via regular pairing of music and positive memories relating to childhood experiences of feeling safe and secure (an instance of what Juslin et al. have termed 'evaluative conditioning' (2012: 622). The vivid internal imagery she experiences suggests that such episodes also possess a quality of low arousal absorption.

4) Connectedness

"We were standing as the train was full. We were sharing my iPod, one headphone in each ear listening to the music together ['Drunk' by Ed Sheeran and 'Read all about it' by Professor Green]. I like to listen to music a lot with my friends and right at that moment there was a sense of connection, where we were together in this sharing of music whilst being separate from everybody else around us" [Phoebe, 16]

"I thought to myself 'I know I'm angry but I don't want to make myself into the wrong by being angry', so I put on some calm music[Pachelbel Canon] and just thought about it. I think about what the world is actually like without those people and how peaceful it is. Eyes open. I was just sitting on my bed... I pictured water fountains, meadows, flowers ... just getting away from it and experiencing the beauty". [Lily, 11]

One form of connectedness has already been mentioned (see theme 1. above) i.e. listening episodes where young people chose to lock into stimulus properties of music specifying excitement or a sense of momentum that transformed scenarios perceived as routine, commonplace and static. A sizeable proportion of participants expressed a preference for 'one ear in' (wearing one headphone) at all times, solitary and social. Rather than effecting a disconnection from immediate context, the intention seemed to be to feel simultaneously 'connected' with the current situation and alternative preoccupations/modes of experience. This resonates with what Kassabian identifies as a 'networked-through-music subjectivity':

> Like *Star Trek*'s Borg, we are uncomfortable being unhooked from the background sound of ubiquitous subjectivity, so we turn radios on in empty rooms and put speakers under our pillows ... We prefer to be connected, need to listen to our connections, can't breathe without them. (Kassabian 2001, para. 27)

Free written descriptions of listening experiences also referred to episodes featuring a sense of intimate connection with others inhabiting the same listening experience (as in the extract above where friends share headphones) or a connection with emotional qualities in music heard that took individuals away from current mental set, so reframing experience (as in extract 2). The latter example exemplifies the emotional strategy Helsing et al.(2012: 413) have termed 'reappraisal'

5) Articulation of Mood and Emotion

"When I'm angry I ... sit on the floor in my bedroom facing the wall. I call it my comfort position actually - kind of curl up in a ball and get a blanket and sit on the floor. If I'm really angry and just want to hit something I use music to like express how I feel...The funny thing is ... I put on music to express how I feel and then I walk around and tidy my room. So I've got angry music on [Metal], but to keep my hands busy - it's kind of weird, like keeping my anger in really - and I keep my hands busy and just tidy - even if things are already tidy I tidy them again" [Anna, 12]

"I know it's not good but I tend to bottle up my emotions. I don't like showing them a lot. So usually I would use music to channel my emotions ... let it out a bit ...I think I'm sort of immersing myself in it... when I channel it. I blank everything out so people can walk straight by me and I wouldn't notice them or anything ... the music makes me feel like inside I would be amplifying it [the emotion], like I blow it up and sort of like look at it from a different view... sometimes I'd see myself, I would be watching myself do it". [John, 17]

*When the music is not on, I don't usually, I don't think about my<u>self</u>. ... my iPod got wiped once which was **very** stressful,*

because most of the songs I wanted to listen to I couldn't ... I can't explain the mood I was in, but I just...I wanted to listen to music. Nothing sounded right, so I just...I just put it away, yeah, I couldn't listen to anything because ... I didn't have anything to match ... I couldn't ...really, um, express the inner emotions when I wanted to. Yeah stressful [Zak, 17]

Findings from the current study support Saarikalio and Erkkilä's observations regarding i) the importance of music to young people as a medium affording the expression and release of emotion; ii) the use of melancholic or 'angry' music to give form to or 'vent' negative emotions - a regulatory strategy the authors term 'Discharge' (2007: 99). Episodes in this thematic category constituted a third group of particularly common experiences for this sample. Notably, music appeared to provide a discrete temporal window for the process of 'emoting' - legitimizing and pinpointing feelings initially experienced as unfocused, sometimes confusing and even embarrassing. Two regulatory strategies identified by Helsing at al. (2012) - musical emotion regulation (enhancing emotions by listening to music, represented in extract 1) and reappraisal (reframing, represented in extract 2) - were highly valued. However, in contrast with episodes concerned with positive emotions, reports revealed that individuals tended to inhibit behavioural expression of negative emotions (as in extract 1 above). In three cases (all male), individuals appeared to rely on music to access emotion i.e. music served as a necessary reflective 'mirror' with which to gauge/articulate current state of mood (as in extract 3).

6) Daydreams/Imaginative Fantasies

"Whilst listening and looking out of the window, I start to almost daydream/imagine I am in some kind of music video scenario [Noel Gallagher's 'High Flying Birds – Aka...what a life']... chopping between looking around and imagination... I was recreating some of the visuals I had seen in the video and applying them to real life situations" [Louise, 15]

"I have a big habit of having daydreams, and when I'm listening to music I just seem to – all the daydreams seem to come out … When I was listening to 'Astor Piazzolla' in the car there was this rather creepy track and I imagined there was someone being murdered – a small child actually, and there was this evil killer who we don't know of – no-one's ever seen their face as it's hidden under a black hood. And they're the one killing all these children. And it leaves. And it sees a little poor baby. It's had some trouble with being a child in its previous life and it thinks that all children are horrible due to what's happened to it in its childhood. It looks at the child and it starts to feel sorry for the child. Then it forgets, throws it into the river and starts murdering a whole load of other kids. So that's one of – that's one of the stories. I can't really remember all of the stories I dream about. It's usually quite dramatic". [Lily, 11]

"I definitely use music to day dream. Quite a lot. I've got this very weird obsession since I was very young that I've got some strange power built up in me and in certain music that I will imagine myself doing some weird super power

thing… In one piece – something by 'Basshunter' ... I just see myself in some random road ... floating in the air, moving stuff with my mind…Well, it wouldn't be a road it would sort of…I would be randomly in the middle of the playing fields just sort of controlling the weather, that sort of thing… And as the music progresses [it's] sort of a bit like a sci-fi movie. The actions and the drama gets more intense as the music gets to its climax .... 'Basshunter's very techno-modern and it is easier to access it in the techno-modern music because it is very ... sort of bass dominated so you can get very strong feelings from it and ... if the volume's at a certain pitch I find it a lot easier to access that path. I can't do it with classical music. Just really big sounds. I can get really into my imagination. I have got a bit of an over active imagination!

Q. This is regular this accessing?...

*R. Yes. Daily. Sort of alternate world sort of thing… because I don't really like **my** world a lot.*

Q. And is access only through music?

R. Only through music".

[John, 17]

A multimodal, heteronomous mode of listening appeared to be the default listening mode across the age range. [1] Consequently, listening episodes characterized by an inwardly directed attentional focus and spontaneous production of visual imagery constituted a fourth group of particularly common experiences for this sample. Content of episodes referenced both memories (nearly always positive) and associations (equating to the psychological mechanisms Juslin et al. (2010: 622) term 'episodic memory' and 'visual imagery' respectively). In fictional fantasies (as opposed to those featuring reminiscence or contingent associations), musical qualities (both musical attributes and extra-musical sources specified by the music) were generally tightly linked to mental imagery arising. Episodes were often described as daydreams, appeared highly absorbing and were particularly common when travelling. Music videos associated with certain songs often influenced mental imagery - from complete imaginative recall of a video to video-based fantasies (typically where the listener pictured themselves as the central character of the film) and instances featuring an inwards and outwards fluctuation of attention where internal imagery blended with/informed what was actually seen (as in the example in thematic category 8 below).

A high proportion of the imaginative fantasies of younger participants (age 10 to c. 13) possessed a strongly narrative quality i.e. a clear sense of 'storying' to music involving fictional characters (as in extract 1 by eleven year old Lily). By contrast, imaginative fantasies of older adolescents were often autobiographical, formed of a somewhat dream-like succession of images (as suggested in extract 2 by 17 year old John), and referenced ideal or alternate virtual realities.

One hypothesis of extant research in the fields of hypnotherapy and personality psychology is that of a link between particular personality traits, age, activities and quality of subjective experience. Absorption (equated with what is termed 'spontaneous' or 'everyday' trance in hypnotherapeutic literature) has been correlated both with the trait of openness to experience (Costa and McCrae, 1985) and a capacity for fantasy-proneness (Wilson and Barber, 1981)), including the generation of mental imagery (e.g. Lynn and Rhue, 1986). Both absorption and fantasy-proneness have in turn been correlated with hypnotic susceptibility (Heap et al., 2004) and an involvement in the arts (specifically music or drama) (e.g. Hilgard 1979). Studies of hypnotic susceptibility have consistently shown hypnotic ability to rise from 8 years of age, peaking at circa 12 years of age, then to plateau for two years before gradually decreasing during adolescence (Rhue, 2004: 120) due to societal pressure to acquire 'reality-based competencies' (Rhue, 2004: 121). This points towards the intriguing possibility that young people aged between c. 8-14 demonstrating a preference for the arts (either or both making and receiving) may be predisposed to transformations in consciousness when listening to music. At present however there is insufficient evidence to substantiate such a claim.

7) Vicarious Exploration of Emotion.

"I'm a rubbish dancer but I – I love to prance about in my room and grab objects and start acting out stuff and looking in the mirror and seeing how I look with different emotions on my face even though I actually don't feel any of them … I like to just experiment with moving. And I find myself walking round the room in circles a lot when it's [music's] on…it's usually aggressive emotions with David Sanborn, – I don't exactly smile a lot when listening to David Sanborn. Yeah I can do all the aggressive stuff when listening to David Sanborn… I try and act out having 'attitude'". [Lily, 11]

"I like rap especially 'Tinie Tempah'. It makes me feel cool. I try to dress up as a rapper. In my bedroom I kind of put on a hat sideways and my 'bling' and my trousers and my pumps and then I just lip sing sometimes to them. It's private ! No one knows I do it. It makes me feel powerful Having the music there ... it brightens me up and makes me brave" [Martha, 11].

'Vicarious' is understood in the sense of something that is 'experienced imaginatively through another person or agency' (O.E.D, 1989). Music affords the means for individuals to rehearse behavioural and emotional responses that may later be used in real life. This is particularly relevant for young people given that emotional and cognitive development are rapid during adolescence. What is often termed 'emotional intelligence' (Goleman, 1996) - the process of recognizing and managing emotions, of developing the emotional skills necessary to handle stress and relate to others - can be usefully informed by music. [2] The use of music to articulate and frame

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[1] An exception were a body of experiences provided by young people with extensive musical training. The impact of a high level of involvement in making music upon subjective experience is will be examined elsewhere.

[2] Of course, music may also be used in a way that hinders the development of emotional intelligence.

and give coherence to emotions has already been outlined (thematic category 5 above). A small number of participant accounts also related to instances where individuals had chosen to 'model' or 'practise' behavioural aspects of emotions. All such accounts came from the younger members of the sample (as in extracts 1 and 2 above). Both Lily and Martha experiment with different identities, both of which give them a (probably) rare opportunity to sample an exhilarating sense of domination and importance. Externally focused attention combines with a strong sense of imaginative involvement.

8) Multimedia Experience

"I'll be on the Xbox playing 'Halo Reach' - a first person shooter [game]. I have my headset on talking to my friends and I'll be listening to music at the same time - I make different playlists on my iPod for what I'm feeling like. Since I've mostly got shooter games I have 'Screamo' and angry music to get in the zone ... play more aggressively. But if I'm not feeling aggressive I put on 'Blink 182' - it doesn't always have to match the game. The game has its own soundtrack but it's not really gripping music, It's just a background sound, like white noise. So I put my own music over the top of it. - I can engage with it - it immerses me more in it.

My attention's is in several places. The music in the game comes in from the speakers on the front [of the monitor], my music comes in from the iPod dock and I hear the people I'm talking to through the headset. I do hear the sounds from the game as well - they're louder than the music - if you fire your gun you'll hear it. I've got a lot of different things that I can switch to. I'll be playing Xbox and might want to change the track I'm listening to, and then I'll go on Facebook for a minute and I might get a text, have to reply to that and go back to Xbox again. They're all like going on at the same time it doesn't feel like I'm leaving one [activity]....they're still sort of there ... I get really into it - an alternate world. I feel important - I'm 'master of my own universe'. It's weird actually - I don't feel aggressive. Most of the time it's like kind of calming.

I actually enjoy reading more than I enjoy playing Xbox, but only in short bursts. You have to focus on one thing, so eventually you get bored. [Jake, 14]

As indicated earlier, a heteronomous approach to listening appeared to be the commonest mode of musical interaction across the age range. Experiences could be multisensory (typically involving a perceptual blending of musical attributes with aspects of surroundings, altering or enhancing how they were seen) or multimodal (e.g. simultaneously listening and imagining) and attention was typically multiply directed and fluctuating (e.g. one moment music might be the prime focus yet seconds later barely perceived). Additionally, a sizeable body of reports described multi-impact experiences arising from engagement with several different mediums in conjunction i.e. 'media multitasking', a phenomenon that has shown a sharp increase in the last five years (Rideout et al., 2010) due to the increasing range of online media (online TV online applications such as YouTube and social networking) and increased availability of such media on mobile phones, MP3 players, handheld video games players (Rideout et al. 2010: 2) plus the availability of media in bedrooms.

Jake's description of gaming (opposite) refers to what appears to be a regularly accessed experiential mode in which a present-centred sense of immersion derives from both simultaneous and successive active engagement with a range of media, some of which are perceived to interact e.g. congruence of aural and visual movement and affective valence. The emphasis is on high stimulation (sensory bombardment), fast pace and novelty/change in some ways reminiscent of an 'adrenaline-rush' ride in a theme park. Jake speaks of 'immersion' and his description of the task environment he has created and reference to decreased awareness of the real world accord with qualities of immersion identified by previous research concerning gaming experience (Jennett et al., 2008) The sense of total occupation may be one reason he describes this type of experience as 'calming' i.e. it enables him to detach from other concerns. Attention is distributed and fluctuating, temporarily foregrounding one or more of a number of impacts including self-chosen music, diegetic sounds from the game (e.g. gun-shots), the real-time conversation with other players via headphones and a variety of visual stimuli (the rapidly altering visuals of game, laptop and mobile phone screens). Sigman (2005) has suggested fast-paced media may over stimulate the orientation response (instinctive reaction to sudden movement, sounds, visual change) exhausting the capacity for sustained attentional focus on a single stimulus or activity, a theory that would resonate with Jake's comment regarding reading.

IV. CONCLUSION

Preliminary results from this initial stage of a three year mixed method empirical inquiry confirmed findings from previous research regarding the importance of music as a means of self-regulation in everyday life. Self regulation from mid-adolescence appeared to be relatively targeted and consciously managed, but even the youngest members of sample demonstrated an unquestioning acceptance of music as a source of self-referential emotion (Sloboda, 2010: 499) and expected to interweave self-chosen music into their daily lives, indicative of an already established listening 'habitus' i.e. 'an embodied pattern of action and reaction in which we are not fully conscious of why we do what we do' (Becker, 2010: 130). Analysis of unstructured diary and interview data (using IPA) indicated that four types of experience were particularly valued by young people: 1. Experiences providing momentum, energy, excitement. 2. Experiences characterized by imaginative fantasy (images or associations). 3. Dissociative experiences. 4. Experiences where music was used to articulate or frame mood or emotion. Additionally, experience types 1 and 2 frequently exhibited characteristics of absorption (effortless involvement).

Heteronomous listening constituted the norm for most young people in this sample. i.e. musical engagement was characterized by a multi-modal, multiply distributed, fluctuating attentional focus. As 'digital natives' (Campbell, 2010: 219) young people (certainly in the industrialized West) have never experienced a time when it was not possible to download whole libraries of music, courtesy of digital music services such as Spotify or iTunes (or the ethically more dubious YouTube Converter and its equivalents) to mobile sound devices, allowing music to potentially inform any

everyday life situation or activity. Exposure to musics via YouTube or music video channels mean that the process of encountering new music is often visual as well as aural. The default mode of musical encounter for the young people in the current study was rarely sound alone, but rather hearing and seeing, doing, moving, thinking.

Free descriptions and interviews provided tentative support for the hypothesis that there may be age-related differences in the way in which music is subjectively experienced, particularly during the transition from pre-pubescence to early and later adolescence, but the observations made here necessarily remain speculative due to the small sample size. At this stage, findings certainly imply that the potential impact of the interaction between factors such as age, personality traits (e.g. fantasy-proneness, absorption, dissociation, hypnotic susceptibility) and involvement in the arts upon subjective experience could constitute a fascinating and fruitful line for future research. To date, the study of music via personality research has tended to focus on the topic of musical preferences (the connection between personality characteristics and liking for certain musical styles), rather than on the extent to which personality influences individual interaction (particular behaviours, qualities of subjectivity) with music in daily life (Rentfrow and McDonald, 2010: 687).[3]

This initial study provides preliminary information about young people's subjective experience of music in everyday 'real world' scenarios. Further research in this area would appear timely, possessing two key applications:

First, knowledge of the different ways in which young people experience music, and of the attachment of these accumulated ways of experiencing to particular socio-cultural contexts, could provide a potential means of connecting their formal and informal interactions with music, an objective shown to offer practical benefits in terms of raising participation levels in and the efficacy of formal music education at secondary level (Green, 2008).

Second, as Västfjäll et al. have recently observed, research exploring the ways in which music listening may benefit subjective wellbeing and health has tended to focus on short-term response in clinical contexts, rather than long-term effects on normal population in naturalistic settings (2012: 405). A substantial body of literature indicates that it is individuals under the age of 18 who experience the greatest therapeutic benefits from musical intervention in terms of stress reduction (Pelletier, 2004). Research concerning the informal listening practices of children and adolescents may serve to inform the practice of music therapists in a clinical context, but could also be used by teachers and health professionals working with young people to facilitate the development of the metacognitive skills necessary to utilize music in a way that supports wellbeing (Hallam, 2012).

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[3] Vuoskoski and Eerola's (2011) lab-based study of the role of mood and personality in the evaluation of discrete emotions is a notable exception.

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