

A case study in developing person-centred approaches to evaluating participation in Community Music

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Disciplinary background A. Music Psychology informed mixed methods and a person-centred approach as the most suitable means to capture and understand the multiple and varied aspects of a complex intervention.

Disciplinary background B. Community Music's principles of facilitating creative and musical potential of all participants provided the area of interest for investigation.

Abstract

Aims of this research were exploratory, seeking to identify and understand key psychological and communicative processes taking place during Community Music workshops.

Community music (CM) can have powerful impacts on the lives and musicality of people with additional support needs (ASN). A previous study found that music workshops for a group of young adults with diverse ASN led to an ongoing enthusiasm to engage in music; wider recognition of musicality; increased self-confidence; being happier and/or more relaxed; and better ability to interact with unfamiliar situations and people (Wilson & MacDonald 2019). A second study with the same CM organisation demonstrated improvements in individuals' self-expression, confidence, mood, and social skills across three groups of varied ages and abilities in different areas (MacGlone et al., 2020). Therefore, further investigation is required to identify which aspects of the interventions were effective in achieving these outcomes, from both practitioners' and participants' perspectives. For this reason, this paper's focus explores communicative processes between workshop participants and practitioners during the workshops. In keeping with person-centred research, capturing and understanding participants' experience may present particular practical challenges, for example, when researching a group comprised of people with different ASN.

Both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered from the second study mentioned previously (MacGlone et al., 2020) to address the aims. Interviews were held with 5 community musicians which investigated their approaches to and experiences of delivering the workshops. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Thematic analysis, which seeks to identify, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within data (Braun & Clarke, 2014) was applied. Quantitative 360-degree video data were gathered and analysed from 1st, and 10th workshops of a 10-week programme from one resource centre. Twelve (4m, 8 f) participants were recruited with ages ranging from 22 to 67. Data from 6 female participants and 1 male participant were gathered, the other participants' data were not included due to absence. Video data sampled were from the same section of the same song. An analytical choice was to focus on participant gaze interactions, as this has been used in music therapy research as a measure of participation (e.g., LaGasse, 2014), however this potentially valuable approach is not commonly used in CM. Gaze events, where a participant initiated looking at another participant or practitioner were counted over the video extracts.

Three themes describing dimensions of interpersonal processes in the workshops were identified. Individualised communication highlighted how the practitioners tailored communications and activities to meet and accommodate participants' preferences and needs. Humour was used

frequently as a means to demonstrate that practitioners considered themselves on the same level as participants. Building relationships was prioritised over the course of the workshop programme; consistent patterns of engagement were maintained by practitioners to achieve this, based on an open, friendly approach.

From the analysis of sampled video data, 6/7 participants showed an increase in gaze events between the two time points, for 4/7, the number of participants looked at also increased. In paired-sample t-tests, there was no statistically significant result found. Cohen's d s was applied as a suitable measure of assessing effect size; the result, 0.25, indicated a small effect size using benchmarks from Cohen (1988).

Interdisciplinary implications. Qualitative results demonstrate participation was facilitated both at an individual level through exploring and integrating participants' preferences but also at a group level where humour was used to create a shared experience. While quantitative data were not statistically significant, further detail and a new perspective was gained through capturing interactions within the circle formation often used in CM workshops. There is potential for using this measurement with a larger number of participants to assess participation for those with ASN in a non-clinical setting. While it is valuable to note that gaze interactions increased, future work could include measurement of other modes of communication (e.g. gesture, proxemics) and how they may correspond with practitioners' verbal and musical interactions. Main contributions of this paper offer an approach for gathering important multimodal information about participation as well as highlighting importance of key interpersonal processes as described by practitioners. It bridges Music Psychology and Community Music in that psychological methods used were informed by Community Music's holistic research approaches.

References

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