

# Music and bereavement: Exploring how music can help when dealing with loss

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B.A. (Hons) in Psychology

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## Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

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### Abstract

This project focused on the subjective use of music when dealing with bereavement. The main aim of this study was to look at how/if the deceased has impacted the relationship with music for the bereaved individual while also focusing on how the bereaved has used music to help them when dealing with the loss of their loved one. Data was collected for this study through the use of eight ( $N = 8$ ) semi structured interviews. These interviews were subject to thematic analysis as described by Braun and Clarke (2006). Three main themes emerged from the analysis, “Memories of music associated with the deceased”, “Importance of music”, and, “Personal use of music following bereavement”. The results suggested that all of the participants engagement with music was impacted by the deceased either before or after their passing and that music was useful for the majority of participants in helping them after bereavement. While this study did answer the research question it put forth, it is important to note it did not aim to generalize these findings to the overall population. However, for further research this study proposes that there should be more research in the same vein as the current study as it is important to learn more about the bereaved individuals subjective use of music following bereavement.

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Losing a loved one is perhaps one of the hardest and most difficult experiences we can encounter in our lives (Boyras, Horne & Waits, 2015). As we age it becomes more likely that we will experience the loss of a loved one (Hansson & Streobe, 2007). The loss of a particularly close loved one is often known as bereavement and this is the state of losing a significant relationship through death (Waldrop, 2007). With the loss of a significant relationship it comes as no surprise that this can lead to adverse effects on an individual. For example, studies have shown that major depressive episodes occur in 50% of widows or widowers one month after death with 25% of episodes occurring at two months after bereavement (Ando et al., 2010; Zisook & Schuchter 1993). Other short-term effects of bereavement may lead to disruptions in sleeping and eating patterns (Pienta & Franks, 2006). Studies have shown that bereavement in youth may lead to elevated symptoms of depression and substance abuse (Kaplow, Saunders, Angold & Costello, 2010) while Bereavement in adulthood can lead to increased depression (Mash, Fullerton & Ursano, 2013), guilt, self-blame and anger (Pretorius, Halstead-Cleak & Morgan, 2010).

Bereavement can have a lasting impact on people and according to Yu et al., (2017) it is one of the most severe life events that can cause grief. A study conducted in 2017 by Yu et al., found that bereavement in the case of sibling loss in children led to a 71% increase in all-cause mortality risk compared to those who did not experience sibling loss in childhood. This finding can be fortified with earlier research that has shown people linked via social ties have interdependent health and that a death or illness in one person may influence the health of another connected person such as the bereaved individual (Christakas, 2004; Rostila, 2010). This increase in all-cause mortality is not exclusive to sibling loss as Li et al., (2014) found that parental death in both, childhood and adolescence was associated with increased risk of all-cause mortality and that this persisted into early adulthood. The increase in all-cause mortality was also indicated in the findings of Rostila and Saarella (2011) in which they

concluded that this increase was potentially due to the unexpected nature of losing a significant attachment figure.

The loss of a parent or parents in childhood has been seen as a possible causal factor in childhood depression (Bowlby, 1980; Elizur & Kaffman, 1983). Research has also shown that parental bereavement in childhood leads to an increase in suicide ideation (Jeon et al., 2013), suicide attempts (Kuramoto et al., 2010; Mittendorfer-Rutz et al., 2012) and an increased risk in suicide completion. Burrell, Mehlum and Qin (2018) found that this suicide risk was higher in younger offspring and that the bereavement led to both short-and long-term effects on suicide risk. However, non-parental bereavement at a young age can lead to knock on effects as the child may also lose parental support temporarily while the parents grieve the loss of a family member (Morris, 2012). The adverse effects of bereavement are not exclusive to the loss of family members. Previous studies have found that the loss of a friend could lead to more traumatic grief than the loss of a non-close family member (Holland & Neimeyer, 2011; Ringler & Hayden, 2000).

However, we do not all deal with loss or bereavement in the same capacity (Prigerson et al., 2013). For some moving on from loss happens quickly but they later find they are unable to enjoy life like they used to while the majority of people seem to move on from loss very well and are able to continue life as they had before bereavement (Bonnano, 2004). People aim to restore order in their world that has become disorderly due to loss by sharing stories of the deceased, talking about their feelings and seeking spiritual significance in coincidence (Nadeau, 1998). According to O'Callaghan, McDermott, Hudson & Zalberg, (2013) for decades healthy bereavement embodied working through a detachment from one's relationship with the deceased while investing in new relationships. The idea that an individual has to actively work towards dealing with these feelings of loss is one heavily rooted in western societies beliefs in regard to coping with grief (Streobe, Streobe, Schut,



Zech & van den Bout, 2002). Streobe et al (2002) mentions how it is widely accepted that the bereaved must engage in “grief work”. Grief work is the process of emotionally confronting loss and replaying events that occurred before, during and after the death of a loved one while also focusing on memories and trying to “move on” or detach from the recently deceased (Streobe et al., 2002: Freud, 1917).

A longitudinal study conducted by Sveen, Eilegard, Steineck & Kreicbergs (2013) looked at how or if 240 young adults who had lost a sibling to cancer had worked through their grief surrounding the bereavement. In the study they found that the majority of participants who had taken part in the study had not fully worked through their grief and this was associated with lack of social support and more recent loss. Previous research has shown the importance of social support from family and friends during the grieving process (Streobe, Streobe, Abakoumkin & Schut, 1996). One of the main tasks in bereavement grief is to reduce the frequency of intrusive thoughts of the deceased, sadness and, yearning for reunion (Maciejewski, Zhang, Block & Prigerson, 2007). Recovering from these intrusive thoughts is important so we can tolerate reminders of the deceased without the induction of these thoughts (Freed, Yanagihara, Hirsch & Mann, 2009). If one does not recover from these intrusive thoughts at a time beyond that which is considered adaptive, they may be experiencing complicated grief (Lobb et al., 2010) It should however, be noted that there are different varieties of grief and grief experience (Bonanno & Kaltman, 2001)

While many people will cope with their grief without the need to seek any help or therapy, others may need professional support or a “crutch” to help them (Currier, Neimeyer & Berman, 2008). One such form of support is that of music therapy. Music therapy is a therapeutic method that uses music as a means of communication and expression (Mossler, Chen, Heldal & Gold, 2011). Music therapy aims to achieve the goals of emotional support, Self-expression, physical interaction and social interaction (Wigram et al., 2002) The benefits

of music therapy vary across a wide spectrum. Studies have shown that music therapy can improve mood (Magee & Davidson, 2002), reduce the symptoms of severe mental illness (Mössler, Chen, Heidler & Gold, 2011; Silverman & Marcionetti, 2004), aid in reducing stress (Ogba et al., 2019), and be suitable as a therapeutic intervention for treating pain (O'Kelly & Koffman, 2007).

The research shows that music therapy has proven successful in the past in helping people deal with loss and/or grief (Smeijsters & van den Hurk, 1999). More recent research on this topic shows similar findings. Iliya (2015) found that people who experienced eight to ten sessions of music therapy had a greater improvement in grief symptoms than those who received standard care. These music therapy sessions can involve a multitude of coping techniques such as song writing, audio or video recording, improvisation, lyric analysis and drumming (Carr, 2016). According to Carr (2016), Music therapy can be an important intervention to create coping techniques for bereaved families. Music therapy been particularly helpful as an intervention for children's bereavement process (Hauptfleisch, 2019). Hillard (2007) conducted a study that looked at children who have suffered bereavement. The children were randomly assigned into the three groups, the first group were assigned to music therapy, the second social work and the third an eight-week waiting period. Data was collected via pre and post-tests of behaviour rating index from children along with the bereavement group questionnaire for parents and guardians. In this study, Hillard (2007) found that there was significant improvement in behaviours and grief symptoms among those in the music therapy group while the social support group had improvements in their behavioural problems but no improvements in grief, and the wait-list group showed no improvements in grief or behavioural problems.

Music therapy has also shown to be beneficial in the grieving process for adolescents. A mixed methods study conducted by McFerran, Roberts and O'Grady (2010) subjected 16

bereaved adolescents to 12-14 sessions of music therapy. The goal of the sessions was to offer opportunities for expression and contemplation while hoping to aid in the process of grieving. According to McFerran et al., (2010) participants reported the music therapy groups as being beneficial in helping to express their feelings and allowing them to comfortably flow between a range of emotional states. Music therapy is not exclusively beneficial to children and adolescents. A study conducted by Schwantes, Wigram, McKinney, Lipscomb and Richards (2011) looked at the use of music therapy in a group song writing process. In the study Schwantes et al., (2011) worked with a group of Mexican migrant farmworkers that had lost co-workers in a serious van accident. The study used a Mexican song form used for telling stories of the deceased (the Mexican Corrido) and by using this, the authors provided a unique and culturally appropriate format to aid in the song writing process of the music therapy. According to Schwantes et al., (2011) the result of the study led to the farmworkers growing closer and making connections with the friends that they had lost, along with providing a recording of the song that would aid in the therapeutic process that could continue long after the conclusion of the therapy.

The evidence suggesting music therapy being a useful tool in dealing with grief is not surprising as research shows music can have an impact on mood (van der Zwaag et al., 2013) and, according to Maslow (1977), music can allow us access to our moments of highest happiness and fulfilment. Music has shown to be an effective tool used in mood regulation (North, Hargreaves & O'Neill) and can be effective in alleviating or discharging negative emotions (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Schwartz & Fouts, 2003). Mood regulation is the process of modifying or maintaining the occurrence, duration and intensity of moods, both, positive and negative (Gross, 1998). Music as a tool for emotional/mood regulation has been shown to help us from adolescence, through adulthood and into the later years (Saarikallio & Erkkilä, 2007; Saarikallio, 2011). In particular the research on adolescents using music as an

emotional self-regulation tool has shown that aggressive music can help to discharge anger and that happier music can be useful as a distraction from worrisome thoughts (Behne, 1997) According to Saarikallio & Erkkilä (2007) most teenagers use music to actively manage their feelings by selecting music that they feel they need to listen to at that specific moment. While most young people describe using music to make themselves feel better (McFerran, et al., 2010) it doesn't always work and vulnerable young people are the most likely to feel worse after listening (McFerran, O'Grady, Sawyer & Grocke, 2012). The research on adults shows that music is also heavily connected to emotional self-regulation (Saarikallio, 2011) and according to Greasley & Lamont (2006) this includes helping with internal experiences and memories. A study conducted by Bishop, Karageorghis and Loizou (2007) looked at the music usage of 14 young tennis players. In this study the participants reported the consequences of listening to music to include, improved mood, increased arousal and visual and auditory imagery. The participants also consciously listened to music to elicit these various emotional states (Bishop et al., 2007)

Many studies have looked at how music therapy can aid with the grieving process following bereavement (Amir, 1998; Heath & Lings, 2012; McFerran et al., 2010; McFerran-Skewes, 2000; Schwantes et al., 2011) However, there have been far fewer studies that have explored how the bereaved subjectively used music associated with the deceased to help following the bereavement. Vastfjall, Juslin & Heartig (2012) suggest music therapy trends are beginning to shift away from the purely clinical contexts towards understanding the role of music in the general population. Following that shift in trends of music therapy research, this study will look at how the deceased may have impacted the relationship with music for the bereaved individual while also focusing on how the bereaved used music to help with the bereavement. By focusing on the subjective/personal use of music in helping with bereavement, this study attempts to populate the possible gap in this area of research.

## **Methods**

### **Participants**

Using convenience and snowball sampling, participants were recruited in and around the national college of Ireland, Dublin city centre and online through social media. Of the 8 participants, 37.5% were female while 62.5% were male. All of the participants were above the age of 18 with the ages ranging between 20 years old to 70 years old ( $M = 34.75$ ,  $SD = 17.53$ ). All participants were Caucasian and from Ireland. Participants were recruited up until the point of data saturation. Participants were made aware of their right to withdraw at any time during the study, that they would be voice recorded on a mobile device and that they could view their transcripts and the final version of the study upon completion. Participants all took part voluntarily and were offered no remuneration or other rewards for taking part in the research. Participants names were changed in the transcripts in order to protect their identity and ensure anonymity

### **Data Collection**

Data was collected through the use of semi-structured interviews (See appendix A for interview schedule). The aim of the semi -structured interviews was to allow participants to speak openly about their engagement with music throughout their life, their engagement with bereavement and finally, how/if they feel music has helped them in dealing with the bereavement. The interviews were recorded on a mobile device and transcribed using the Otter transcription and recording application. However, due to the transcription application not being completely accurate, some parts of the interview were not transcribed by the application and were instead typed by the researcher while listening to the audio files.

### **Data analysis**

Considering the nature of qualitative analysis, it is important to note that the analysis of this data may in some way, be influenced by the researchers own beliefs and assumptions

on the topic of music and bereavement. The researcher has used music in their own life as a coping mechanism during tumultuous times, one such time being bereavement. The researcher has also witnessed others close to them using music associated with their late relatives during stressful times as a coping mechanism. These experiences may subconsciously impact the interpretation of the data. Braun and Clarke's paper (2006) notes that authors of qualitative research should make their analytic stance about their study's theoretical and epistemological position known. This research is following an inductive approach as it is data driven and develops its findings from the data (Thomas, 2006). The research is based on the social constructivist theoretical stance as it focuses on the subjective meaning of the language and context of the interviews that are being interpreted (Burr, 2015)

### **Data analysis procedure**

Due to the sensitive topic of bereavement it is important to note that prior to data collection this study was subject to the ethical guidelines put forth by the National college of Ireland. These guidelines were adhered to and data collection and analysis were given the go ahead to commence. At the stage of recruitment participants were supplied with an information sheet entailing the details of the study (See appendix B). Immediately before the interview's participants were supplied with a consent sheet (See appendix C) and if they chose to sign it the interviews then took place. The transcripts from the semi structured interviews were analysed using Thematic analysis following the guidelines of Braun and Clarke (2006). This report was written following Braun and Clarke's thematic analysis that follows six specific steps in order to analyse the data (see Table 1). The first step was familiarization with the data, and this required transcribing the interviews and reading and re-reading them. Following this step was the generation of initial codes. This was done using coloured post its and highlighters and colour coding specific words or phrases that may fit a theme or pattern in the data. The third stage involved sorting these initial codes into themes

using tables in excel to aid in keeping specific codes or themes together. These themes and codes were then reviewed. First, at the point of initial coding and secondly at the point of theme creation. After this the themes were then fully defined and named. The final step was producing the report, and this involved the write up of the analysis and themes making use of quotes supporting those themes. (See Appendix D for a breakdown of the stages of analysis).

Table 1. Phases/Stages of Braun and Clarke's (2006) Thematic analysis

|         |                               |
|---------|-------------------------------|
| Phase 1 | Familiarisation with the data |
| Phase 2 | Generating codes              |
| Phase 3 | Searching for themes          |
| Phase 4 | Reviewing the themes          |
| Phase 5 | Naming the themes             |
| Phase 6 | Producing the report          |

## Results

Through careful and thorough analysis of the data (transcripts) using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, three main themes were prominent. The themes were "Memories of Music", "the Importance of music", and, "Personal use of music" This section will first give a brief description of the meaning behind the construction of each theme before going into greater detail of the themes using supporting quotes or phrases from the transcripts. However, due to the constraints of this paper, only the most important quotes from the interviews will be presented in the results. The remaining quotes used in theme creation can be seen in Appendix A. The first of the three themes were "Memories of music". This theme was focused on the memories that the participants had of music associated with the person that they lost. This theme also touched on the memories the participants had that felt as though they were bringing "back" their relative. The second theme was "Importance of music". This theme embodied the importance of music to the individual. During the final stage of coding/theme creation the theme of importance was denoted by codes such as togetherness, connection, importance and meaning. The third theme in the data was "Personal use of music". While there was a lot of information about people's personal use of music in their everyday life it was important to ensure only quotes relevant to the research question were included. Taking this into consideration, this theme entailed the use of music associated with the deceased while also focusing on the comfort that people have taken through the use of music associated with the deceased. The two of the three main themes are broken into subthemes that can be seen in table 2 and will be expanded on in greater detail when discussing each theme in depth.



Table 2. Main themes and subthemes

| Themes   | Subthemes  |
|--|--|
| <p><b>1. Memories of music associated with the deceased</b></p> <p>This theme was focused on the memories of music that the bereaved associated with the deceased.</p> <p>“the music played at his funeral would make me think of those trips because it was the final memorial of this enjoyment of music, he encouraged me to have” (Daniel)</p> | <p>i) Bringing “Back” through music</p>  |
| <p><b>2. Importance of Music</b></p> <p>This theme focused on the importance the bereaved held for music associated with the deceased.</p> <p>“Music with her (late relative) had a really big effect” (Laura)</p>   | <p>i) Importance of the meaning of music in the bereaved/deceased’s life.</p> <p>ii) Feelings of connection and togetherness</p> |
| <p><b>3. Personal use of music following bereavement</b></p> <p>This theme focused on how the bereaved used music after the bereavement.</p> <p>“for a while after it (passing of relative) I used music to just kind of drown everything out a bit and just getting lost listening to music” (Ryan)</p>   |  |

### Memories of Music associated with the deceased

Memories of music associated with the deceased was the first of the main themes derived from the interviews. This theme was based on the memories involving music that the participants had of their loved ones “last year my wife died so a lot of music would be memorised from our time, we were 50 years together” (Jim). For some participants the memories of music at specific times was important for reliving happier memories “the music played at his funeral would make me think back to those trips because it was like the final

memorial of this enjoyment of music he encouraged me to have” (Daniel). Daniel was thinking back to the happier times before the death of his grandfather. The trips that Daniel referred to in this quote were in reference to the fishing trips he enjoyed with his grandfather when he was younger “when out fishing, whatever music my granddad would naturally have playing, I would be picking it up” (Daniel). These memories seem to hold importance to Daniel as it allowed him to think back to the happier times and those fishing trips he enjoyed with his grandfather and how they impacted his own enjoyment of music. Some participants had very early memories of music associated with their lost relatives

“One of the abiding memories I have is a ceilidh in my mams house and I was 5 or 6 but I remember my mother putting me on a chair and getting me to sing a song she must have thought me” (Mike)

These early memories The memories of music associated with the deceased relatives seemed to evoke both happy and sad emotions in some of the participants “If I listen to a song that reminded me of her it would make me feel good but if I play a song she thought me it would make me feel much worse”(Mary) The general memory of music associated with the lost relative was present in all of the interviews, therefore it was important to interpret these memories to have meaning and not just recite the memories. This was achieved through breaking this section up with a subtheme. The subtheme was the feeling of Bringing the relative “back” through the use of music and memories.

### ***Bringing “Back” through Music***

This subtheme focused on participants reporting the feeling of their deceased relative being brought “back” through the use of music.

“With music you can re-enact being with them or singing with them and its really emotionally powerful and I don’t think anything else would have the same impact

music would because it comes to all of your senses and you can imagine them sitting there.” (Laura)

This quote from the interview with Laura shows how her memories of her late grandmother were strengthened through music to the point that it felt like her grandmother was sitting there with her. This shows the impact that music has had on Laura since the passing of her grandmother. This particular feeling of music bringing the deceased relative “back” was echoed throughout other interviews

“If I was to listen to some of the slower songs and some of the things that wouldn’t naturally make me emotional but that will make me think of him and it gives that over all sense of love and warmth and sort of brings him back” (Daniel)

The feeling of the relative being brought back through the use of music associated with the deceased shows the impact music has had on the individuals since the passing of their relative. This feeling of the relative being brought “back” along with the memories of music associated with the deceased could have led to a sense of happiness or comfort for the bereaved individual, in turn impacting the engagement with music for the bereaved.

### **Importance of Music**

Importance of music was the second theme, and this was due to the frequency that importance or the codes associated with importance came up during the coding process and finalization of themes. Throughout the series of interviews all of the participants spoke about the importance of music in their lives. This theme was split into two subthemes: i) Importance of the meaning of music in the bereaved/deceased’s life, and ii) Feeling of connection and togetherness. Many participants spoke about the impact that music had on their lives “The first question you asked me ‘is music important’ and I said no, but the more we go through the interview the more I realise it is” (Mike), and the importance that music had for the person they had lost “Music with her (late mother) had a really big effect”

(Laura). The idea that music is important for people was also evident in further quotes that highlighted how music can be helpful during hard times such as bereavement “It (music) took a lot off the grieving side, things were mellowed a little bit by music” (Mike) This quote from the interview with Mike, illustrates that music was helpful in alleviating some of the grief after the bereavement.

### ***Importance of the meaning of music in the bereaved/deceased's life***

This subtheme of the importance of music had a focus on the meaning that particular songs, artists or pieces of music had on the individual or the bereaved while also focusing on the impact that the deceased had on the relationship with music for the bereaved individual “I think the song itself (Smile by Lonestar) is about a breakup, but I resonate it with a loss” (Laura). This particular conversation that Laura had with her mother changed the meaning of this song for her. In this particular case the participant (Laura) resonates that specific song with a loss, due to an earlier conversation with her late mother “We were talking about music and out of nowhere she said ‘this is a song I’d like played at my funeral’ and the song was called ‘Smile’ by Lonestar” (Laura). One participant spoke about the meaning of lyrics in songs “when you’re in that sad place, the lyrics are just everything and you hang on to every word and it’s just expressing exactly how you’re feeling” (Anna). The lyrics in the music meant something to Anna as she felt she could not express herself properly when they were in that sad place “It’s funny how you just found these songs and they express exactly how you were feeling and the loss you were feeling and they could express how I was feeling a lot better than I could” (Anna). The importance of the lyrics for Anna seemed to be integral to her grieving process in expressing emotions and feelings that she may not have been able to without the importance of music.

While participants such as Anna found importance in the lyrics, others found their importance in the influence their deceased loved ones had on their engagement with music.

Pete has been playing music “nearly 10 years now” and his late grandfathers influence is one of the reasons he has continued to play music “My grandfather was a massive Johnny Cash fan and that would be one of the things I could think of as a kid that would have impacted me in regards to music”. The impact and influence of a deceased loved one on the individual’s engagement with music was evident in multiple interviews “Yeah she (late mother) played piano to the point you can teach. She was very musical and that definitely influenced my interest in music, and it was just a really nice, lovely, easy, creative outlet” (Mary). This influence carried on throughout the life of the bereaved individuals “I like to crack out a Johnny Cash tune every now and then when there is an acoustic guitar around, why not? It’s definitely a driver towards it”. In this quote Pete speaks about playing Johnny Cash songs on guitar “every now and then” and this is due to the love his grandfather had for Johnny cash. Carrying on playing music after the bereavement was also evident in Mary’s interview “Yeah I think there is a connection in the past with playing it and in the years after her death I played piano a lot in my spare time whereas I used to only play it when I had lessons”. Mary playing Piano in her spare time after the passing of her mother shows that It was helping her to feel connected to her mother via the medium of music. It was clear in these two interviews that the influence of Pete and Mary’s late loved ones were important in their lives and in particular in their engagement with music.

### ***Feelings of connection and togetherness***

This subtheme was the embodiment of the connection and togetherness that participants described when talking about the music surrounding the deceased and/or the period after bereavement. Music was important and brought a sense of togetherness to participants “I’ve always seen music as really family oriented” (Mike). In the particular case of Mike, he felt that music “brought a different thought process to people, of togetherness”. This feeling that music brought togetherness was echoed throughout the interviews “she

loved singing and we went down to the bar and she sang, and everybody was joining in and it's kind of brought everyone together" (Laura). This quote from the interview with Laura was in the context of her late grandmother using her love for singing to bring all of those in the bar together. This feeling of togetherness was important for people when they were grieving their late relatives "It was definitely beneficial (the medium of music) but I feel like we would not have come together as much and people would have looked for their own meaning or happy remembrance in their own way" (Pete). Togetherness was evident in the period directly after the loss "My mother's wake was a party of music and remembering my mother and we sang her songs and her party pieces and, in that way, it was comforting and had a sense of togetherness" (Mike). However, it wasn't only togetherness that was important to people. In the interviews the feeling of connection with their lost relative was reported by some of the participants "It was a really nice way to feel connected with her and still to this day I think of her when I play" (Mary). In this quote from Mary, she was referencing playing the Piano, a skill that was originally taught to her by her late mother. This feeling of connection seemed to be particularly important for Mary "I definitely don't think I would have as strong memories of her if I didn't have music to keep that connection there and keep those memories present". In this case, music was important to Mary as, without it, she doesn't feel as though her connection and memories of her late mother would be as strong as they are now. This leads on to the final theme present in the data, Personal use of Music.

### **Personal use of music following bereavement**

This is the third and final theme present in the data and it focuses on how people have personally used music in the aftermath of bereavement. The use of music after the bereavement was different for some of the participants. Some avoided the music that they had associated with the deceased in the immediate aftermath of bereavement "After my grandfather passed it was a bit sour to listen to Johnny Cash because it would have reminded

you of him” (Pete). Over time however, it became easier to listen to the music associated with the deceased and avoidance turned into actively listening to the music “but now it’s more so if there is a family gathering you gotta throw on Johnny Cash” (Pete). Avoiding listening to the music was in multiple interviews. In the case of Ryan, his grandfather who passed was a fan of classical music “my maternal grandfather was more into classical music”. Since his grandfathers passing, Ryan stopped listening to classical music when he went on walks “Since then (the passing) I have generally upped my pace on walks more and running more and using higher tempo music instead of the more relaxed classical” This avoidance of the music interest he shared with his grandfather shows that Ryan still finds it too difficult to listen to the music that he once shared with his grandfather. This in turn shows the impact the bereavement has had on Ryan’s personal engagement with music associated with his late grandfather.

While avoidance was evident in some of the interviews, it was not the only way people used or responded to the music associated with the deceased. For some, people used music for escapism following the bereavement “I used to have the music of the time that it happened (grandmothers passing) really blaring and that done something for me” (Jim). In this quote Jim recalls the death of his grandmother when he was in his teens. He used music to block out the world by “blaring it” and it seemed to help him. He mentioned how it “sort of comforted him” This use of music can also be seen in the interview with Ryan “For a while after it (grandfathers passing) I used music to just kind of drown everything out a bit and just getting lost listening to music”. This sense of escapism through music for both Ryan and Jim showed that they used music to isolate themselves from the feelings of sadness that were associated with the bereavement that they had experienced. It should be noted that the personal use of music for participants after bereavement was not all negative as in the cases of avoidance and escapism. Some participants found comfort in the use of music associated

with their late relatives “the last present she bought me was a teddy bear and if you twist its tale it would sing ‘you are my sunshine’ and I found myself using that a lot after she passed”. Laura mentions that the last present her late mother had bought her was a teddy bear that played music. The use of the musical toy would have been a source of comfort for Laura after the traumatic experience of losing her mother. Laura was not the only participant to find comfort from music that was associated with their late relative. Mary mentions “in the years after her death (mother) I played piano a lot”. This quote mentioned earlier in the report also highlights that Mary used Piano, that she associated with her mother quite frequently after the bereavement and this would have been a source of comfort for her, much like Laura’s use of the musical toy that her mother had bought her just before her passing. In one interview the participant spoke about her late partners non traditional funeral “a lot of the ceremony was music based... and there was one song about how god wouldn’t judge us no matter who we are so long as were good human beings” (Anna). When speaking about the funeral Anna mentioned that “I loved expressing myself through the music”. This quote shows that Anna personally used the music at her partners funeral to not only express herself but to help through the early stages of the bereavement.



## **Discussion**

The emphasis of this study was not on the use of music in a therapy setting, rather on the subjective use of music for the participants following bereavement. This study aims to understand if/how the deceased impacted the engagement the bereaved had with music and if the bereaved used music associated with the deceased to help them after the bereavement. The results suggested that all of the participants engagement with music was impacted by the deceased either before or after their passing and that music was useful for the majority of participants in helping them after bereavement. This section will discuss the three main themes that have helped in answering the research question in conjunction with the relevant literature.

### **Memories of music associated with the deceased**

All of the participants spoke about the memories of music that they associated with their loved ones. For some these memories held importance when thinking back to happier times with their loved ones and the music associated with it. The bereaved individuals in the interviews spoke fondly of these memories. The memories that we successfully recall are those that hold great meaning and emotion to the individual (Cady, Harris & Knappenberger, 2008). Many of the participants believed that they wouldn't have these memories without the use of music, this shows the impact that music has had on the bereaved in recalling these memories as music acts as a powerful source for the creation and retrieval of personal memories and associations (Sloboda, 2003). According to Flynn (2014) music holds its place in episodic memory. This would aid in explaining why music helped the bereaved recall specific events or memories of their deceased loved ones. This theme was broken down into the subtheme of Bringing "back" through music. Many of the participants spoke about the feeling of music bringing their relative back to life for a moment and how it helped them to relive these moments. The feeling of being brought back has been documented in research

surrounding bereavement and described as “sense of presence experiences” (Steffen & Coyle, 2011). This feeling of bringing “back” or “sense of presence experiences” have shown to have positive implications for well-being following bereavement (Rees, 2001).

### **Importance of Music**

The importance of music to the bereaved in regard to the deceased was one of the main themes to arise from the interviews. This theme was split into two subthemes: i) The importance of the meaning of music in the bereaved/deceased’s life, and ii) Feelings of connection and togetherness. Many of the participants spoke about the music that they associated with their late relatives and in particular about the meaning they took from the songs or the lyrics of those songs. For many, the death of a loved one changes the world and when such a change occurs the bereaved may turn to various outlets, including music to help them find meaning (Neimeyer & Thompson, 2014). Finding meaning after a time of great upheaval such as bereavement is important. The change in our lives after a significant event (bereavement) could lead to redefinition of self-identity and life transitions (Haslam, Jetten, Haslam, Pugliese & Tonks 2011). The use of music by the participants to find meaning in the current study could be seen as a way to re-define their self-identity after a life transition (Hayes & Minichiello, 2005). Using the music associated with the deceased as a tool for finding meaning and realigning self-identity shows the impact that the deceased had in regard to music in the life of the bereaved. The feeling of connection and togetherness through the use of music following the death of a loved one was evident in many of the interviews.

### **Personal use of music following bereavement**

Throughout the interviews many of the participants spoke about their own personal use of music following the bereavement. Some spoke on the topic of avoidance as they did not listen to particular songs associated with the deceased for some time after the bereavement. It is possible the bereaved was practicing “grief work” (Freud, 1917) by

actively avoiding these songs that would lead to intrusive thoughts and increase sadness. Over time, some of the participants were able to listen to these songs that reminded them of the deceased and this is due to the grieving process and following the “normal” adaptive process in order to avoid experiencing complicated grief (Lobb et al., 2010). Other participants spoke about using music after the bereavement to express themselves, and in one instance it was an expression of themselves and their late partner at their partners non-traditional funeral. This particular finding of expression through the personal use of music following bereavement corroborates with the current literature in regard to contemporary funerals (Adamson & Halloway, 2012). According to Adamson and Halloway (2012), music in a non-traditional funeral contributes to both the public ceremony and the personal existential quest of the bereaved. The personal use of music for self-expression is important as music provides us with a ready-made narrative that can give expression to our emotions (Shanker, Elliott & Fitchett 2009). Some of the participants also spoke about how they used the music to “drown out” everything after bereavement. In the case of two participants they suffered bereavement when they were in their teens. Teens using music to alleviate emotions can be seen in the literature surrounding music and bereavement (McFerran et al., 2010)

### **Implications of the current study**

The emphasis on music and bereavement focuses heavily on music therapy and music in a clinical application. While Vastfjall, Juslin & Heartig (2012) mention in their study that the shift in Music therapy research is shifting away from the clinical application, there is still very limited research on Music and bereavement from the subjective perspective of the bereaved. And while the scope of this study is not on Music therapy, it is still important to conduct this research to understand fully if and how music can be beneficial as a personal use tool in the grieving process. Therapy may not be accessible to most people due to expenses, travel and other possible roadblocks to accessing it. In particular, Music therapy is still a

relatively new healthcare discipline (Ledger, Edwards & Morley, 2013) and is not well known to the average person in Ireland (the country in which this study was conducted). In Ireland there were only 60 qualified music therapists in 2012 (Ledger, Edwards & Morley, 2013) and at the time of that particular study the HSE (Health Service Executive) didn't fully recognise the qualifications of music therapy in a clinical setting. Since then, however the HSE (n.d) now promote the use of Music therapy on their website so it is likely a recognised medical profession in the present. Statistics regarding the number of music therapists in Ireland have been difficult to obtain, however, there exists only one master's level degree (which is needed to practice Music therapy) in Ireland, a country with a population of 4.8 million people and this has been the case since Ledger et al., 2013 study. Through further research using studies similar to the present study, the general understanding of how the bereaved use music to help after bereavement may in turn lead to further awareness and an increase in popularity for music therapy. With the many benefits of Music therapy, it is important for the general public to have more awareness of it and increased access to it.

### **Limitations and strengths**

The current study was not without its limitations. One limitation of the study was the lack of diversity in the participants. All of the participants were white Irish-born citizens. This means that the findings may not be applicable to those from other cultural backgrounds. However, it is worth noting that while all participants were Irish born, it was not clarified whether they identify with another cultural identity. Considering this, it may be unwise to generalise the findings of this paper to all people from an Irish background. Another limitation of this study was the interview questionnaire. While the questionnaire was apt in its application for this study, there could be benefit in a revised questionnaire being used. This questionnaire didn't touch on the type of death in regard to the deceased and this may have

been important as cause of death can impact the grieving process (Rozalski, Holland & Neimeyer, 2017)

While the study had its limitations, it also had its strengths. The study had a relatively large number of participants and this has proven to be a strength as there was data saturation with the number of participants included. A further strength of the study was the lack of similar studies that looked at the subjective use of music for a person post bereavement.

### **Future research**

Through further research in studies similar to the present study, the general understanding of how the bereaved use music to help after bereavement may in turn lead to further awareness and an increase in popularity for music therapy in Ireland. However, future research should take the limitations of this study into consideration. Namely the lack of cultural diversity. Music is something that changes across cultures and so too is bereavement and the grieving process (Young, Parkes & Laungani, 1996), therefore it is important that future research aims to focus on the subjective uses of music in the wake of bereavement. Future research would also consider the limitation of the questionnaire in this study. A revised questionnaire may find further themes. While data saturation was reached in the present study further revision of the questionnaire may lead to more themes emerging.

### **Conclusion**

This study aimed to look at the subjective use of music for the individual after bereavement. The main research questions were how or if the deceased impacted the relationship with music for the bereaved and how the bereaved used music to help them after bereavement. The analysis of the data generated through thematic analysis found three themes that aimed to answer the research question. The three themes were “Memories of music associated with the deceased”, “Importance of music” and “Personal use of music following bereavement”. The study found that the relationship with music associated with the

deceased did change for the majority of participants in the study. Some participants reported a feeling of music “bringing back” their late relative for a moment which seemed to comfort the individual. The study also found that the bereaved individuals used music to help them find meaning during the upheaval caused by suffering bereavement. Following bereavement, the use of music associated with the deceased also changed. Some participants avoided the music while others used it to help express or comfort themselves. While this study did answer the research question it put forth, it is important to note it did not aim to generalize these findings to the overall population. However, for further research this study proposes that there should be more research in the same vein as the current study as it is important to learn more about the bereaved individuals subjective use of music following bereavement.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A – Interview schedule

#### Semi Structured Interview Schedule

- Introduction of participant
  - Name, age, area of study/work, Background...etc
- Reconfirmation of consent and understanding of the study
  - “Before we continue with your interview are you certain you have read and understood the information/consent form.....”
- Music
  - Ask participant about their engagement with music throughout their life
  - Does it hold meaning for them
  - If so what type of music evokes emotion
  - Has music helped you through any tough times?
  - Is it tied to memories, good/bad? Lead into the topic of loss from here
- Loss/Bereavement
  - Have you experienced a time of significant loss or bereavement?
  - Since this loss, has music helped you in anyway as either a distraction or to remind you of the departed?
  - Was the music you listened to or sang, related in any way to the departed?
  - Does it make you feel happy or sad? A mix of both?
- Ending the interview
  - Is there anything else you might like to add regarding music and loss?
  - Please feel free to talk about any of the previous questions or if you have anything else you think you would like to add?
- End of interview

## **Appendix B – Information sheet**

### **Music and Bereavement: Exploring how music can help in dealing with loss**

Hi, my name is Dean Crowe and I am a final year psychology student in the National College of Ireland. I am doing this research as part of my final year project to work towards a bachelor's degree in psychology. I would like to take this opportunity to invite you to take part in my final year research study. The following information will provide in depth details of what the study is and how you can help by taking part in this research. Feel free to ask any questions if anything is unclear. Once you have read carefully all of the information take your time to decide if you would like to take part in the study

#### **What is the study?**

Losing a loved one can be one of the most painful experiences in our lives. Especially if the person we lose is one very close to us. This loss of a significant relationship is what's known as bereavement. There are many different ways people deal with bereavement and this study focuses on how people have personally used music to help.

The main aims of this study are to explore how people have used music to help them during or after suffering bereavement.

#### **What do I have to do when taking part in this study?**

To take part in this study there are two inclusion/exclusion criteria;

1. You must be over the age of 18.
2. You have to have suffered a bereavement that you can recall.

Taking part will also involve being interviewed and voice recorded. The interviews will be recorded so I can transcribe them to text in order to properly analyse them and help to answer my research question. If you do decide to take part a time and location for the interview will be organised.

#### **What happens to my personal information/data?**

Any data collected during this study will be protected. The researcher and the research supervisor will be the only people with access to the data until the final paper is submitted for grading. The data will be kept on a password protected device and can be destroyed at your request with no penalty.

#### **Further information**

Due to this being my final year project the finished paper will be submitted for grading so your information may be partially identifiable. However, any information gathered by the researcher will not be accessible to the general public or anyone other than: i) the researcher, ii) the research supervisor and iii) the grading board.

If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at:

[X17745781@student.ncirl.ie](mailto:X17745781@student.ncirl.ie).

Thank you for taking the time to read this,

Regards, Dean Crowe.



## Appendix C – Consent sheet

### Informed Consent form

#### Music and bereavement: exploring how music can help in dealing with loss

**Researcher: Dean Crowe. Project Supervisor: Michael Cleary Gaffney**

#### National College of Ireland

Please take the time to carefully read the information on this sheet and make sure you understand what is written here and what you read on the information sheet for this study. Do not sign or agree to any aspect of this research if you are not 100% sure of what something means. If you have any questions the researcher will be more than happy to help.

Please tick the box's opposite the following statements, thank you.

- I \_\_\_\_\_ have read the information sheet and understand the study and what taking part in this research means
- I understand that my interview will be recorded for the purpose of analysis
- Due to my information being recorded I may be partially identifiable
- I have been made aware by the researcher of my rights as a participant and that I can;
  - Revoke my consent to continue participation at any time without penalty
  - Request the audio/transcript of my interview at any time
  - Request my data be removed from the study/destroyed in its entirety at any time without penalty

I have read both the information sheet and informed consent sheet and understand what the study entails, my rights as a participant and the protection of my data, and that due to the nature of the interviews I may be partially identifiable

Signature of Researcher:

\_\_\_\_\_

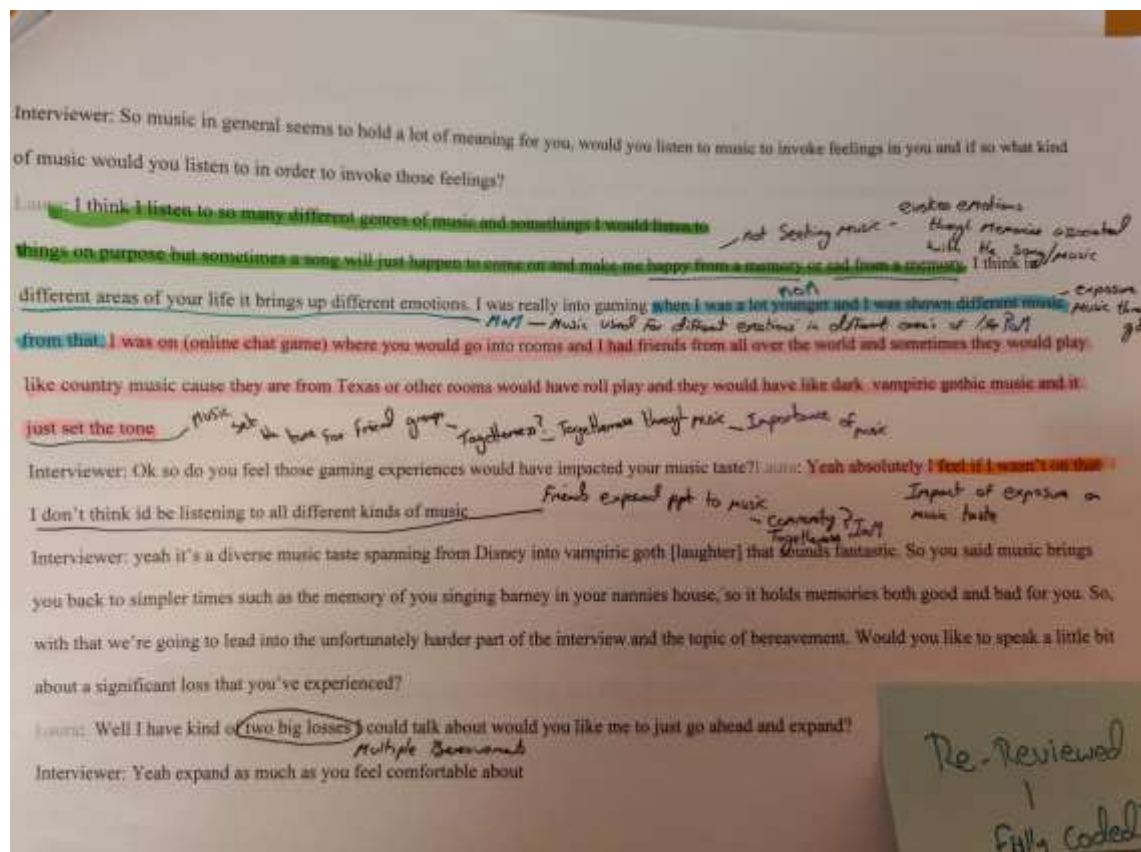
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Signature of participant:

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Date:

Appendix D – Stages of coding



- "So when she died (partner) music was huge for me because I wasn't very good at expressing myself by talking to people and I was more in tune with music, lyrics became very important in songs"
- "It's funny how you just found these songs and they express exactly how you were feeling and the loss you were feeling and they could express how I was feeling a lot better than I could"
- "the medium of music is really fantastic no matter what age, it helps you through those really difficult times"
- "Yeah it (music) brings the person back a live for a few moments and you can sit there with them and the memories"
- "Yeah it (music) brings the person back a live for a few moments and you can sit there with them and the memories"
- "when you're in that place, the sad place, the lyrics are just everything and you hang on to every word and it's just expressing exactly how you're feeling"
- A lot of the ceremony was music based so it was a real "up yours" at the songs that we picked and there was one song about how god wouldn't judge us no matter who we are so long as were good human beings.
- "when you're in that place, the sad place, the lyrics are just everything and you hang on to every word and it's just expressing exactly how you're feeling"
- "Ed Sheeran (associated with mother) is still on and its not sadness anymore its happy"
- "I loved expressing myself through the music"
- "From a young age I've always been encouraged around music just from my parents always playing music and trying to get me into it"
- "As I got older I took a liking to playing guitar"
- "I suppose your natural approach is to connect to something and music is definitely that"

| Key quotes/Phrases from interviews  | Coded for                |
|---|--------------------------|
| "Music with her (lost relative) had a really big effect"  | Importance, Meaning      |
| "she loved singing and we went down to the bar and she sang and everybody was joining in and it kind of brought everyone together"  | Togetherness             |
| "we were talking about music and out of nowhere she said 'this is a song I'd like played at my funeral' and the song was called 'smile' by Lonestar"  | Importance, Meaning      |
| "I think the song itself (smile by Lonestar) is about a breakup, but I resonate it with a loss"   | Meaning                  |
| "this Christmas we all sang the folk songs my nanny would sing and we weren't doing it for sadness it just happened naturally and we all felt togetherness and emotional connection and like she was still there" | Togetherness, Connection |
| "We all have that (meaning from music) it reminds you of a time or a place in time, or someone you would be with"   | Importance, Meaning      |
| "I had music blaring and that sort of comforted me and I don't know why" (teenager when grandmother died)   | Comfort, Importance      |
| "So when she died (partner) music was huge for me because I wasn't very good at expressing myself by talking to people and I was more in tune with music, lyrics became very important in songs"                  | Importance, Meaning      |
| "It's funny how you just found these songs and they express exactly how you were feeling and the loss you were feeling and they could express how I was feeling a lot better than I could"                        | Importance, Meaning      |
| "when you're in that place, the sad place, the lyrics are just everything and you hang on to every word and it's just expressing exactly how you're feeling"  | Importance, Meaning      |

**Final stage of coding/Theme creation**

| Participants                      | Key quotes/Phrases from interviews  | Coded for                |
|-----------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <b>Theme: Importance of Music</b> |   |                          |
| Laura                             | "Music with her (lost relative) had a really big effect"  | Importance, Meaning      |
| Laura                             | "she loved singing and we went down to the bar and she sang, and everybody was joining in and it kind of brought everyone together"   | Togetherness             |
| Laura                             | "we were talking about music and out of nowhere she said, 'this is a song I'd like played at my funeral' and the song was called 'smile' by Lonestar"   | Importance, Meaning      |
| Laura                             | "I think the song itself (smile by Lonestar) is about a breakup, but I resonate it with a loss"   | Meaning                  |
| Laura                             | "this Christmas we all sang the folk songs my nanny would sing and we weren't doing it for sadness it just happened naturally and we all felt togetherness and emotional connection and like she was still there" | Togetherness, Connection |
| Jim                               | "We all have that (meaning from music) it reminds you of a time or a place in time, or someone you would be with"   | Importance, Meaning      |
| Jim                               | "I had music blaring and that sort of comforted me and I don't know why" (teenager when grandmother died)"  | Comfort, Importance      |
| Anna                              | "So, when she died (partner) music was huge for me because I wasn't very good at expressing myself by talking to people and I was more in tune with music, lyrics became very important in songs"                 | Importance, Meaning      |
| Anna                              | "It's funny how you just found these songs and they express exactly how you were feeling and the loss you were feeling,   | Importance, Meaning      |

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|        | and they could express how I was feeling a lot better than I could"  |                          |
| Anna   | "when you're in that place, the sad place, the lyrics are just everything and you hang on to every word and it's just expressing exactly how you're feeling"                         | Importance, Meaning      |
| Daniel | "in my case being into heavy metal it kind of brings you into a more of a direct crowd and brings you to likeminded people"  | Connection               |
| Daniel | "when I'm playing music it's the sensation of being lost in music with the most sensational fulfilment attached to that, it's a different type of escapism that is unique in itself" | Importance, Meaning      |
| Daniel | "Some of his more personally loved songs would encourage more of an emotional response instead of a happy one"   | Importance, Meaning      |
| Mike   | "My mother would be big into the old musicals, so I watched a lot of them when I was younger, so I have always had a strong connection that way"                                     | Importance, Connection   |
| Mike   | "It's (music) always been a part of my family so in the old days we'd have what you would call ceilidh's and you'd have friends and family over singing"                             | Importance               |
| Mike   | "I see music as really family oriented"  | Importance, Togetherness |
| Mike   | "My mother's wake was a party of music and remembering my mother and we sang her songs and her party pieces and in that way it was comforting and had a sense of togetherness"       | Togetherness.            |
| Mike   | "It (music) took a lot of the grieving side of things, were mellowed a little bit by music"  | Importance               |
| Mike   | "Music brings a different thought process to people, of togetherness"  | Togetherness             |
| Mike   | "The first question you asked me is music important to me and I said no but the more we go through the interview I realise it is"  | Importance               |
| Ryan   | "During the tumultuous times it definitely does sort of help to put things into perspective"   | Importance               |
| Pete   | "I've been playing music nearly 10 years now and even as a kid music was always in the house"  | Importance               |

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| Pete                            | "Many drunken nights in someone's house and someone has gotta put on Johnny cash"  | Importance              |
| Pete                            | "It was definitely beneficial (the medium of music) but I feel like we would not have come together as much and people would have looked for their own meaning or happy remembrance in their own way"  | Togetherness            |
| Pete                            | "My grandfather was a massive Johnny Cash fan and that would be one of the things I could think of as a kid that would have impacted me in regards to music and I have happy memories of going down to his as a kid in the summer, playing on the swings and my grandad would have his can of fosters and play Johnny cash songs on the radio" |                         |
| Pete                            | "Yeah I'd say so (grandfathers musical influence as a reason participant continued to play instruments). I like to crack out a Johnny Cash tune every now and then when there is an acoustic guitar around, why not? It's definitely a driver towards it."   | Importance              |
| Mary                            | "I've always loved music and played piano from the age of 6 to 16 and still play it the odd time. Beyond that I've always felt music is important in my life"  | Importance              |
| Mary                            | "Yeah she (late mother) played piano to the point you can teach. She was very musical and that definitely influenced my interest in music, and it was just a really nice, lovely, easy, creative outlet"   | Importance, Meaning     |
| Mary                            | I definitely don't think I would still have as strong memories of her if I didn't have music to keep that connection there and keep those memories present   | Connection              |
| Mary                            | "Yeah I think there is a connection with the past in playing it and in the years after her death I played piano a lot in my spare time whereas I used to only play it when I had lessons"  | Connection              |
| Mary                            | "It was a really nice way to feel connected with her and still to this day I think of her when I play"   | Connection              |
| <b>Theme: Memories of Music</b> |  |                         |
| Laura                           | "With music you can re-enact being with them or singing with them and its really emotionally powerful and I don't think anything else would have the same impact   | Memory, Bringing "Back" |

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|        | music would because it comes to all of your senses and you can imagine them sitting there.   |                            |
| Laura  | "she loved her old Irish folk songs"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Anna   | "Yeah it (music) brings the person back a live for a few moments and you can sit there with them and the memories"   | Memory, Bringing "Back"    |
| Jim    | "We all have that (meaning from music) it reminds you of a time or a place in time, or someone you would be with"  | Memory                     |
| Jim    | "last year my wife died so a lot of music would be memorised from our time we were 50 years together"  | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Jim    | "Yeah she (late wife) loved singing as well"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Jim    | I'd prepare myself to listen to the songs that makes me sad and you'd think why it made you sad and brings you back to when it made you sad"   | Bringing "Back"            |
| Daniel | "when out fishing whatever music, my granddad would naturally have playing, I would be picking it up"  | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Daniel | "it would be more Irish kind of artists like Joe Dolan or Christy Moore. Some of the slower songs would engross an emotional response and the memory of him comes back with that song"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Daniel | "I think without the soundtrack you would just have a single image but with the music it almost helps you relive the whole experience or event"  | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Daniel | "if I was to listen to some of the slower songs and some of the things that wouldn't naturally make me emotional but that will make me think of him and it gives that over all sense of love and warmth and sort of brings him back" | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Daniel | "Our last fishing trip the old radio was on hand and I just remember the fact that we were both enjoying the music and our surroundings"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Daniel | "The music played at his funeral would make me think back to those trips because it was like the final memorial of this enjoyment of music, he encouraged me to have"  | Memory of deceased & Music |

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| Daniel                              | "sting has a couple of sad songs so I remember listening these a couple of days after my grandfather passed and they had no connection with him but brought back that sense of unease and made me feel more upset than some of the songs he would have shown me"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Mike                                | "If I was watching the old movies or musicals that would bring all those memories back of my mother and my father"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Mike                                | "One of the abiding memories I have is a ceilidh in my mam's house and I was 5 or 6 but I remember my mother putting me on a chair and getting me to sing a song she must have thought me"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Ryan                                | "I grew up with very musically inclined parents, they loved music and it was always playing. They were huge fans of rock music and my paternal grandfather was a big fan of trad music while my maternal grandfather was more into classical"  | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Pete                                | "My grandfather was a massive Johnny Cash fan and that would be one of the things I could think of as a kid that would have impacted me in regards to music and I have happy memories of going down to his as a kid in the summer, playing on the swings and my grandad would have his can of fosters and play Johnny cash songs on the radio" | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Pete                                | "After my grandfather passed it was a bit sour to listen to Johnny cash because it would have reminded you of him and now it's more so if there is a family gathering you gotta throw on Johnny cash"  | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Mary                                | "If I listen to a song that reminded me of her it would make me feel good but if I play a song, she thought me it would make me feel much worse"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| Mary                                | "I think it would bring up the more personal or living memories but playing her songs I remember her teaching me and kind of see the moment"   | Memory of deceased & Music |
| <b>Theme: Personal Use of Music</b> |  |                            |
| Laura                               | "the last present she bought me was a teddy bear and if you twist its tale it would sing you are my sunshine and I found myself using that a lot after she passed"   | Comfort                    |
| Laura                               | "Music helps lift your mood when you're feeling low"   | Comfort                    |

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| Jim    | "I used to have the music of the time that it happened (grandmothers' death) really blaring and that done something for me"   | Comfort          |
| Jim    | "I had music blaring and that sort of comforted me and I don't know why" (teenager when grandmother died"   | Comfort          |
| Anna   | "So, when she died (partner) music was huge for me because I wasn't very good at expressing myself by talking to people and I was more in tune with music, lyrics became very important in songs"                       | Expression       |
| Anna   | "I loved expressing myself through the music" (at partners funeral)   | Expression       |
| Anna   | "A lot of the ceremony was music based so it was a real "up yours" at the songs that we picked and there was one song about how god wouldn't judge us no matter who we are so long as were good human beings"           | Expression       |
| Daniel | "when I'm playing music it's the sensation of being lost in music with the most sensational fulfilment attached to that, it's a different type of escapism that is unique in itself"                                    | Escapism, outlet |
| Daniel | "it massively encourages mood and humour when listening but with the writing process I feel it does something on a deeper level, I don't know how to explain it but there is definitely an aspect of escapism in there" | Escapism         |
| Ryan   | "Interestingly enough I have not listened to classical music since he passed"   | Avoidance        |
| Ryan   | "since then (passing) I have generally upped my pace on walks more and running more and using higher tempo music instead of the more relaxed classical"   | Avoidance        |
| Ryan   | "For a while after it I used music to just kind of drown everything out a bit and just getting lost listening to music"   | Comfort          |
| Mary   | "I was really depressed in secondary school and music was an escape and helped me to shut out any problems I had at the time"   | Escapism         |
| Mary   | "Yeah she (late mother) played piano to the point you can teach. She was very musical and that definitely influenced my interest in music, and it was just a really nice, lovely, easy, creative outlet"                | Escapism, Outlet |
| Mary   | "Yeah I think there is a connection with the past in playing it and in the years after her death I played piano a lot in my   | Comfort          |



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|  | spare time whereas I used to only play it when I had lessons" |  |
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