

**Research topic:**

**Music in everyday life: an exploration into the various uses of music among restaurant servers in Makhanda.**

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## **Abstract**

Inspired by the theory of practice in everyday life and symbolic interactionist perspectives, this thesis offers an account and analysis of findings from a qualitative study. It aimed to investigate the everyday uses of music among restaurant servers (individuals) in Makhanda, on an intra-level of analysis. It explored music's role in individuals' lives, and how music as an art is influential in constructing their individuality or self in society. Ten in-depth interviews were conducted through face-to-face collaboration and an audio recording device. It was evident that music plays various roles in people's lives. Music, seemingly intertwined with everyday life permits individuals to diversely use music, for instance with tackling their emotions and mood, as an accompaniment to tasks or even a symbol that serves subjective meaning to self, essentially transforming the routinized mundanity of every day.

## **Acknowledgments**

To God be all the glory, honour, and adoration. I appreciate all the brilliant participants who took part in this research, without them the thesis would not be. Thank you to my family, friends, Rhodes University, the department, my supervisor, and especially Mama Juanita, the rock to which many of us, self-included would turn for guidance, help, and love in trialling time. You are a treasure. Completing this thesis was quite the experience, to say the least, but I am forever grateful for the opportunity because it shaped me profoundly.

Thank you.

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## **Chapter 1: Brief introduction of the research**

### **1.1 Introduction**

It is not possible to speak of music's "powers" without including its contexts of use. However, the effect of music on action varies in degrees within certain settings and with different types of actors (DeNora, 2000:87).

DeNora (2000), expressed her findings in her book "Music in Everyday Life." She conducted four ethnographic studies among women of various ages in the United States and the United Kingdom, investigating music in action (usage) within social settings by observing participants in aerobic exercise classes, karaoke nights, music therapy sessions, interviews, and background music played in the retail sector through unobtrusive observation. The goal for the thesis would ideally be to retrieve information from different restaurant servers (the focus group of individuals) on an intra-personal level and gain an understanding of how music fits into an individual's lives and social processes, explicitly how real people use music in everyday practices such as work, personal, or social life.

It investigated the various uses of music among restaurant servers (individuals) in Makhanda using everyday life and symbolic interactionist frameworks in a qualitative approach. It further explores how music has been able to contribute toward creating oneself (individuality) in society. The research focuses particularly on the South African context of living, in a digital age. Carl and Kutsidzo (2016:30) observed that previous studies on music in everyday life have almost exclusively focused on Western individuals; thus, this thesis seeks to amend and contribute to the gap in knowledge in academia.

This chapter focuses on providing a methodological approach, sampling and selection criteria, data collection method, data analysis, limitations, and ethical considerations used in the thesis on the everyday use of music among restaurant servers in Makhanda. Information from a subset of the population in research is essential because the objective is to obtain findings from participants, which is data translated into feedback in the form of literatures, statistics, and graphs, highlighting the ever-evolving academic space. Music is a well-known art form throughout the globe accordingly, the thesis aims to gather knowledge on how individuals use it in their everyday contexts.

The main objective of the research was to investigate music's active role in the everyday life of individuals (restaurant servers). Subsidiary goals included:

1. To analyze how individuals perceive music within the context of everyday life.
2. To investigate when people in the study decide to listen to music more generally and the motive behind it.
3. To get an understanding of what purpose music fulfills within their everyday life and how it is achieved.
4. To examine whether music contributes meaningfully towards defining oneself or individuality within a society.

## **1.2 Methodological approach**

The research adopts a qualitative style of approach in gathering and assessing data. Qualitative research is especially well suited to the study because it emphasizes the attitudes and behaviours of participants in their natural setting (Roberts, Sitas, and Greenstein, 2003:49). Meaning participants can sufficiently and eloquently voice their perspectives on countless issues, which will provide readers with a sense of contextual meaning individuals associate to issues under research. Moreover, it is non-intrusive, non-manipulative, and non-controlling because the objective lies in events and how they unfold without interfering (Roberts et al., 2003:49).

Qualitative research tries to view the world through the eyes or perspective of the people being studied, thus the main element of qualitative research lies in in-depth or 'thick' descriptions and understanding of actions and events (Roberts et al., 2003:49). 'Thick' description is a rich, lengthy description that captures actions as they occur (Roberts et al., 2003:49). It entails a lot of detail and a lot of quotations. Hence, qualitative reports are ideal as they are full of descriptions and details which give the reader a feeling of social setting, especially when exploring new territory or a new way of looking at a familiar matter (Roberts et al., 2003:50-51). This is advantageous to the thesis especially because investigations pertain to the everyday use of music within a South African context where not a lot of literature is provided, of which the study aims to contribute.

Lastly, with qualitative research, data analysis commences during or immediately following the collection of the first data, as the process continues, modifications occur throughout the study (Burnard, Gill, Stewart, Treasure, and Chadwick, 2008:431). Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, (2000:114) further concur by highlighting how “qualitative research does not seek to quantify data,” instead an immense amount of data can be produced through qualitative research (Pope et al., 2000:114).

### **1.2.1 Ethical considerations**

Since the study adopts a qualitative approach, the researcher is the primary instrument for both collecting and analyzing the data (Roberts et al., 2003:53). The research thrives when the researcher’s personality and attitudes are in check, hence skills such as listening and interpreting are essential (Robert et al., 2003:53). Data collection began with the researcher locating restaurant servers (individuals) in Makhanda from the different restaurants in the area, requesting permission from their superiors to explain the research and its nature to possible participants. Afterward, once necessary contact details were attained from employees taking part in the study, they were contacted after working hours to set up a date that favoured the employees to begin interviews. The research was explained again, and once participants acknowledged the research task, they were required to sign a consent form indicating their agreement. The findings were analyzed based on participants’ responses. Participants were permitted to withdraw from the interview should they feel overwhelmed by the questions. Finally, participants were kept anonymous throughout data collection, out of harm, and discreet through pseudonym usage. Pseudonyms were used to allow participants to choose their own names because unfortunate coincidences can occur when you (researcher) choose a pseudonym for them, because it could be linked to their nickname, their relative’s name, or something similar (Wiles, Crow, Heath, and Charles, 2008:13).

According to Coffelt (2017:227), “confidentiality and anonymity are ethical practices intended to protect the privacy of individuals while collecting, analyzing, and reporting data.” Once information is gathered from participants, the very information becomes the data to be analyzed (Coffelt, 2017:227). Additionally, anonymity and confidentiality are essential since they protect the privacy of those who agree to participate in the

research of their own volition. Thus, participants may feel more at ease completing a survey, participating in an experiment, or interview if they are assured that the information provided will not be linked directly to them (Coffelt, 2017:228). The collected data was executed via face-to-face interviews, and an audio recorder was also used to capture the responses during the duration of the interview. The retrieved data was stored on iCloud /USB.

### **1.2.2 Sampling and selection criteria**

The sample size consisted of 10 interviews with individuals ranging between 20-29 years of age. The sample was derived from the general population of individuals working as restaurant servers in Makhanda. The distinctive cause of studying this specific population is the pivotal role they play in society, in providing necessary goods and services that generate a society's wealth, Marx defined classes according to the means of production (Thomson, 2022:83). Their labour greatly contributes towards businesses; hence, interesting input may be derived on how music aids them with their everyday life or at least how it figuratively aids them in the "mundane." Especially due in part, to the fact that listening to music in situations involving distributed attention, may serve as a useful method of managing consciousness (Herbert, R., 2013:8).

The research uses purposive sampling in data collection, categorized under non-probability sampling methods. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgment in selecting persons (Berndt, 226:2020). Participants were not selected randomly but by using the judgment of the interviewer (Ayhan, 2011:1). This is especially true and helpful since the study involved individuals employed by different businesses under the same category of employment title (restaurant server). The reasons for adopting a purposive strategy, given the aims and objectives of the study, largely attributed to specific kinds of people holding different and important views on ideas and issues in question (Campbell, 2020:654). Furthermore, purposive sampling is advantageous because it allows researchers to select participants most beneficial to the study, and is the most cost-efficient (Gill, 2020:350).

### **1.2.3 Data collection method**

The data collection method consisted of semi-structured questions and in-depth interviews. According to Hofisi, Hofisi, and Mago (2014:62), “In-depth interviews are crucial for data collection on personal experiences and perspectives.” A selection of the questions used consisted of follow-up questions which were used to further explore answers and nascent themes. This data-collecting method enabled the study to derive more in-depth descriptions on the topic because participants were able to exercise free speech and express themselves with the topic of research.

#### **1.2.4 Data analysis**

Data retrieved from participation was analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data that involves searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Kiger, and Varpio, 2020:847). It is a method for describing data, but also involves interpretation in the processes of selecting codes and constructing themes (Kiger, and Varpio, 2020:847). A unique feature of thematic analysis is its flexibility to be used within a wide range of theoretical and epistemological frameworks, which can be applied to a wide range of study questions, designs, and sample sizes (Kiger, and Varpio, 2020:847). Finally, thematic analysis is an appropriate method of analysis in seeking to understand experiences, thoughts, or behaviours across a data set (Kiger, and Varpio, 2020:846). Consequently, identifying themes in interview transcripts attempts to verify, confirm, and qualify them by investigating the data and repeating the process to identify additional themes and categories (Burnard et al., 2008:431).

#### **1.2.5 Limitations**

Although the research adopted purposive sampling to collect data, owing to its unique sampling method it also entails inadequacies. For instance, firstly, there is an unknown probability of inclusion for any selected sample group (Ayhan, 2011:1). Secondly, it may be challenging to locate information-rich participants (Gill, 2020:580). Last, purposive sampling is prone to researcher bias, particularly if rules or criteria for judgment are poorly documented or explained (Berndt, 226:2020). However, this is

combated through critical analysis and reflection regarding my influence on the research process by rereading my interpretations consistently.

Although this study is about music in everyday life, specifically in South Africa, it is essential to note that the results will not be generalizable to the broader South African context because the sample is made up of only restaurant servers or individuals.

### **1.2.6 Conclusion**

This section has discussed the methodological approach, sampling and selection criteria, data collection method, data analysis, and ethical considerations to be used in the study regarding the everyday uses of music among employed working-class individuals in Makhanda.

### **1.2.7 Brief outline of the research**

The following thesis will be divided into four chapters. Chapter Two deals with delivering an understanding of music through contextualizing music in everyday life. It will investigate the different uses of music among individuals, highlighting the self within everyday contexts and how music effectively affects individuals. Chapter Three provides an interpretation of the data collected, guided by everyday life and symbolic interactionist frameworks. It explores the different themes that arose from the interviews, with reviewed literature, essentially providing participant's everyday experiences with music. Chapter Four concludes the paper and summarises the essence of the research.

## **Chapter 2: Contextualising music in everyday life**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The power of music to influence mood and emotions, as well as create routines and social occasions, is widely acknowledged, mostly in the Western world, where Tia DeNora (2000), a sociologist specializing in music sociology, exemplifies this. This thesis attempts to shed light on how music can be a beneficial part of human agency in everyday life by examining music's role and applications in a common social setting, i.e. restaurants in Makhanda. Makhanda is a small town in the Eastern Cape Province, home of Rhodes University, a historically white university (HWU) which is especially known for the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMusFall protests (Macleod, Bohmke, Mavuso, Barker, and Chiwasha, 2018:85).

Denora (2000:153) asserts, it is impossible to speak of music's 'powers' without their contexts of use; however, the effect of music on action varies in degrees within certain settings and with different types of actors. As a result, the thesis's goal would ideally be to retrieve information from different restaurant servers on an intra-personal level and gain an understanding of how music fits into an individual's social process, explicitly how real people use music in everyday practices such as work, personal, or social life. DeNora (2000), who expressed her findings in her book "Music in Everyday Life," conducted four ethnographic studies among women of various ages in the United States and the United Kingdom, investigating music in action (usage) within social settings by observing participants in aerobic exercise classes, karaoke nights, music therapy sessions, interviews, and background music played in the retail sector through unobtrusive observation.

The thesis hopes to highlight the various uses of music in social settings individuals decide to assert it in using the everyday life and symbolic interactionist frameworks in a qualitative approach. It also investigates whether it aids in character or identity development in society. The research focuses particularly on the South African context of living, in the digital age. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Carl and Kutsidzo (2016:30) observed that previous studies of music in everyday life have almost exclusively focused on Western individuals; thus, this thesis seeks to fill that knowledge gap in academia.

## **2.2 Everyday life**

The sociology of everyday life is an umbrella term that includes other related but distinct theoretical perspectives such as symbolic interactionism (also used in the thesis), phenomenology, ethnomethodology, and dramaturgy, to name a few (Alder, Alder, and Fontana, 1987:218). Everyday life is described as the ordinary human experience, vulnerable to systemic and structural processes, and voluntarily understood as unthinkable and unknown (Nowak, 2016:50).

Everyday life is not limited to the lives of ordinary people, regardless of class, but also includes the lives of elites. Sztompka (2008:31) argues in an article that everyday life is not synonymous with private life and is not opposed to public life; it encompasses both domains, even if the participating actors differ; actions in the public sphere, on the other hand, are as "everyday" as any private event. It provides a new perspective on all sociological issues (Sztompka, 2008:35). Symbolic significance emerges from everyday practices that undoubtedly become routine activities, such as grocery shopping, evening television viewing, and, in the case of this study, listening to music while working out, discussed later in the chapter.

### **2.2.1 Contextualizing everyday life**

Everyday life research focuses on people in their natural settings or everyday social environments. Natural interaction is the foundation of all understanding of society because it entails describing and analyzing the nature and implications of everyday life interactions. This includes the feelings, perceptions, and meanings that members encounter, as well as the environment they create in the process (Alder et al., 1987:219). Furthermore, it focuses on interaction and communication. Attention switches towards consciousness, collecting information based on the actor's everyday attitudes and behaviours, which involves an interactionist perspective on the self (Alder et al., 1987:219). As a result, consciousness and engagement are viewed as reflexive because interaction shapes or socializes people while also playing a role in shaping their character or interaction (Alder et al., 1987: 219).

According to Alder et al. (1987:230), the strength of everyday life sociology lies in the ability to generate sociological concepts or insights from seemingly insignificant settings. The study of everyday life effectively serves as a foundation for understanding the underlying causes of social order, action, and reality construction. Examples of studies in everyday life include Hochschild's (1983) emotional work from airline stewardesses; Adam Smith's (1937[1776]) the social division of labour serving individuals' everyday needs; and Goffman's book (1959b) on the presentation of self in everyday life and how they attempt to control others' positive impressions of them.

The research approached the topic from the social context and perspective of Makhanda restaurant servers, exploring how music helps them in their daily lives from a variety of social settings they encounter, including work (restaurant serving), personal (leisure), and social (life). Given the various settings in which restaurant servers could use music, they should be able to provide fruitful perspectives on it. Urban spaces present constant challenges due to the diversity of the location, social groups, and function, as everyday life is never static (Fishman, 2013:721). Furthermore, as part of people's daily experiences, urban space faces tension from the various constructions of reality that emerge in everyday life (Fishman, 2013:721). Politics, hardship, conflict, and violence are not uncommon in Africa's segmented cities.

Everyday life is a form of visible social existence, so it always includes relationships with others. This means it will always happen in a social setting (Sztompka, 2008:31). When we are alone sometimes, others appear in our thoughts, memories, and dreams, including those we love and dislike, as well as rejection and appreciation. This phenomenon known as "internal conversation" by Margaret Archer, as highlighted in an article by Sztompka (2008:31), suggests that these are important components in shaping our actions and motivation.

Second, everyday events are not unique. They tend to become cyclical and rhythmic, forming routines (Sztompka, 2008:31). Third, everyday life frequently takes on ritual, dramatized, and stylized forms that adhere to certain un-reflexive, deeply internalized scripts. This is typical of routine activities such as exercising in the morning, reading the newspaper at breakfast, and going out for a lunch break. This is more prevalent in

the case of more sombre, sacred occasions such as religious ceremonies, university commencement, or a court trial (Sztompka 2008:32).

Fourth, everyday life utilizes our bodies, biological foundations, physical abilities, and emotions, with all their strengths and weaknesses, potential and limitations. Fundamentally, our bodies are essential tools in our full-fledged interactions with others (Sztompka, 2008:32). For instance, DeNora noted that individuals use music to mediate everyday tasks because music can be applied to a range of practices such as exercising, driving, and walking. She compares music to water in the way individuals organize their bodily actions. This is because music consists of “sound waves, vibrations that the body may feel even when it cannot hear” (Nowak, 2016:46). In essence, people use music. After all, it affords bodily processes to participate in social settings and therefore can be used in return as a device for organizing the body (Nowak, 2016:46).

Fifth, everyday life is typically spatially localized; it takes place in specific locations such as the home, the street, the church, and the athletic field, and the character of the site has a significant impact on the character, style, form, and content of social events. Sixth, everyday life episodes have a specific temporal duration, which can be longer or shorter. Consider an encounter with a friend on the street, dinner at a restaurant, an academic seminar, a long-distance flight, or a vacation voyage. They will all have unique 'structurally expected durations' (Sztompka, 2008:32). Thus, the actual or expected length has a major effect on the character of a social event.

Finally, everyday life frequently flows subconsciously with actors unaware of their habits and routines. For example, this is why the question 'What are you doing now?' on the phone frequently elicits an embarrassed response 'Oh, nothing', which is false, assuming the responding person is deceased. We are constantly doing something as long as we live (Sztompka, 2008:32). Although everyday life occurs in visible social existence, people's activities stimulate social contexts in everyday spaces, as seen above. The following section attempts to put into perspective who the "self" is in everyday life.

## **2.2.2 Understanding self in everyday life**

In an article inspired by the theories of William James, Charles Horton Cooley, and George Herbert Mead, exploring identities in social interaction, Plummer (2021:21) notes that the "self" is an essential connection between the truly unique individual and the more inclusive social being. The self implies that the fundamental aspect of who we are is how we interact and communicate with others in social settings throughout our lives (Plummer, 2021:21). The self includes an inner being (who is "I") that is constantly in dialogue with the outside world of expectations (referred to as "me"). Individuals partake in ongoing conversations with themselves and others to figure out who they are and how to make sense of their lives and the world around them (Plummer, 2021:22). As a result, we are continuously in a battle to balance the resources we have within our bodies and emotions, partially genetic, and with those we discover all around us in other people, close and far, whose importance contributes to giving our lives meaning (Plummer, 2021:22).

Our self is our identity. This is because identity means a specific type of experience or a method of dealing with a type of experience, reducing it to a process. An experimental process best understood through the medium of music. Music appears to be the key to identity because it provides a sense of both one and others. In short, identity is subjective in the collective (Hall and Du Gay, 2006: 110). Music is used to locate oneself among others. The construction of an autobiographical soundtrack is an intra-individual process because people compare themselves to others. They imagine how their experiences and perspectives may or may not lead to similar musical preferences (Roy and Dowd, 2010:17). Moreover, identity experience is described as a social, interactive, and aesthetic process. The aesthetic rather than contextual aspects of performance (extending performance to listening and vice versa) betray the social, group, and individual continuity (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:110). We express ourselves and our sense of rightness in an act of engagement when we choose to play and hear "what sounds right" (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:110).

### **2.3 Contextualizing music in everyday life**

In 2010, the global digital music industry was worth approximately US\$4.7 billion, up more than 1000% from 2004. Given its prevalence and obvious importance to people, the role of music in daily life deserves serious consideration (Rentfrow, 2012:402).

Instead of associating everyday with the mundane, In Nokwak (2016)'s article everyday is seen as a site for grounding contemporary modes of music consumption, where individuals' structural position and reflexivity meet and mediate. Aside from the relationship that individuals form with the music technologies available for consumption, their practices take place in everyday contexts characterized by the systemic and structural processes to which they respond (Nokwak, 2016:43). As a result, they are constrained by their everyday contexts while remaining emotionally reflective about the range of options available to them within each of these contexts (Nokwak, 2016:43). Hence, a definition of everyday life that encompasses a structural and mundane component helps situate modes of music consumption, explaining their modalities and the reasons why individuals engage in them (Nowak, 2016:43).

Music and everyday life are inextricably linked because the variables of each facilitate the experiences that people have of one another. Music accompanies people throughout their daily lives and mediates their experiences with everyday contexts (Nowak, 2016:44). Music is listened to according to how individuals connect with it and spread well into different contexts. This is because individuals interpret various pieces of music as potential accompaniments to their daily lives through a gradual process of spreading or diffusing music into the various contexts of life. The range of responses that music elicits in people is what gives it its power (Nowak, 2016:45).

Furthermore, music is not a singular phenomenon and, thus, cannot be captured by one definition; however, scholars emphasize that the distinction between music and "not music" is ultimately a social construct, shaped by and shaping social arrangements and cultural assumptions (Roy and Dowd, 2010:5). Understanding what music can do and enable requires recognition of its sociocultural context. When the same music is used in different contexts, it can have substantially different effects. In this way, music as a mode of interaction expresses and constitutes social relations such as subcultures, organizations, or nations, that embody cultural assumptions about these relations (Roy and Dowd, 2010:5).

According to Roy and Dowd (2010:5), music can be thought of as both an object and an activity. Music is frequently viewed as an object, with a moment of creation, consistency of characteristics across time and place, and the potential for use and effects. As a result, music can be abstracted from its time and place and applied to a

new context (Roy and Dowd, 2010:6). Music is treated differently than other objects, as both an institutionalized tonal system and a commodity. Music as an institutionalized system of tonality means that certain notes are used and repeated frequently enough to be considered "things" (Roy and Dowd, 2010:6). Tonality is the division of pitch into distinct tones (i.e., "notes"), which serves as the sonic foundation for songs and other compositions (Roy and Dowd, 2010:6). Music is also represented by objects of exchange ("commodities"). Music has been sold for centuries, with the range of commodities expanding over time (Roy and Dowd, 2010:7). This aspect of music will not be addressed in the study.

Music's object-ness, better understood as an activity (process), is embedded in institutions that are ubiquitous in daily life (Roy and Dowd, 2010:8). Approaching music as an object or activity risks treating it as separate or self-contained, rather than as an integral part of and inseparably linked to social life. In this light, meaning is defined as the shared implication that occurs when music refers to something larger than itself, representing some aspect of social life (Roy and Dowd, 2010:12).

Music's embeddedness complicates meaning construction because meaning cannot be found solely in a musical object or activity (Roy and Dowd, 2010:12). Indeed, musical meaning is sociological because it occurs through interaction while also facilitating interaction (Roy and Dowd, 2010: 15). For example, contextual meaning is never solely in the music because there is no single meaning. While some listeners condemn the violence in rap lyrics, limiting the spectrum of lyrics to that meaning; others hear them as signifying a necessary critique, a political rallying cry, and/or an emerging art form (Roy and Dowd, 2010:15). As a result, music and its meanings can frequently provide profound insight into people's identities. It signals and contributes to the formation of an individual's identity, as well as collectivizes them. Individuals find meaning by connecting text and context through music to represent their evolving autobiographies (Roy, Dowd, 2010:16). Thus, music is best viewed as an ongoing activity that involves interactions with others e.g., family or lovers.

Moreover, individual meanings differ from academic meanings (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16). For example, some people enjoy South African House music because it is a good background music for studying, and not because of the production process. Music "gets into" people through a deliberate meaning-making process. It enters the

body with diminutive thought, as when certain musical elements inspire action (e.g., marching or rest) (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16). Therefore, thinking about the nature of musical power can help to enhance our understanding of other types of human and non-human (i.e., music) relationships, as well as the role that similar objects play in people's daily lives (De Nora, 2000:x). According to Green (1933:18), music is debilitating because it provides emotional and mental stimulation, and stimulation is frequently a reaction to music. This emphasizes music's diversity, which mediates certain effects on us and our experiences.

### **2.3.1 Music, an aesthetical experience**

Music is considered a form of art that defines human culture and behaviour (Juslin, Ingmar, and Danielsson, 2023:193). Individuals' aesthetic judgment shapes and narrates how they perceive art. Aesthetic judgment is defined as the process of determining the value of a piece of music as "art" based on one or more subjective criteria (e.g., originality, expression, and beauty) related to the artwork's properties, such as its form or content (Juslin et al., 2023:193). It focuses on an object's aesthetic properties, which reinforce the attribution of artistic value (Juslin et al., 2023:193).

In a musical context, aesthetic experiences may involve a unique mode of music listening in which the listener's attention is focused on the music, where one or more aesthetic value criteria are applied to it, either explicitly or implicitly. According to Juslin (2013:246), an "aesthetic experience" occurs when aesthetic criteria are applied to music, or simply, when the listener implements 'an aesthetic attitude', and once a piece of music is considered art, the aesthetic judgment process can begin. As a result, the listener evaluates aspects of music's form and content based on their value as art, so the term "aesthetic experience" appears suitable.

However, this does not preclude people from having intense, emotional, and valuable musical experiences without making aesthetic judgments. It simply states that responses involving aesthetic judgments can differ in some ways, such as when people create music for different occasions (Juslin, 2013: 247). Nonetheless, the classification as art, and the subsequent evaluation, are made on a conscious level (Juslin, 2013: 248). For example, listeners who heard their all-time favourite music

demonstrated self-awareness and the processing of historical and emotional memories, regardless of the music's style (Hodges, 2013:276).

### **2.3.2 A social aspect**

People interact in social settings because "space" cannot exist without humans. Instead, people negotiate their way through social situations. The expectations and micro-social norms produced by the formalities and institutions created by the dominant shape the character of their counter's behaviour. Due to this reflexivity, interaction is both voluntary and structured (though not fully determined) (Alder et al., 1987:219). In one instance, a study on the impact of COVID-19 on Spanish people began on March 14, 2020, and discovered that participating in musical activities was associated with reduced anxiety and increased subjective well-being. Anxiety, depression, indignation, and sensitivity to social risks all increased during confinement, while happiness and life satisfaction decreased. Listening to music or actively participating in music, either individually or in groups, has been linked to psychological well-being, decreased anxiety, depression, or coping in people with health conditions, as well as increased subjective well-being in general (Cabedo-Mas, Arriaga-Sanz, and Moliner-Miravet, 2021:2).

## **2.4 Music, an object of everyday life**

Music is many things: organized sound, a social construction, a perception, and an external fact that is produced and consumed, making it both a material and symbolic (Vannin, and Waskul, 2006:6). Music in the thesis is seen as the "object" or "symbol" in everyday life that people use to mediate social settings. A symbol is an arbitrary substitute for something else; a symbol is what allows us to indicate something apart from the actual thing to which the symbol refers (Vannin, and Waskul, 2006:8).

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in sociology that addresses how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions among individuals (Carter and Fuller, 2016:932). It is better comprehended around four principles: the principle of interactive determination, the

principle of symbolization, the principle of emergence, and the principle of human agency (Carter and Fuller, 2016:934).

The perspective is used in the thesis because it focuses on how actors use music to constantly create and recreate experiences from one interaction to the next (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933). Furthermore, Blumer's methodology emphasizes intimate understanding rather than intersubjective agreement among investigators, which is a necessary condition for scientific inquiry to have worth (Carter and Fuller, 2016:934). To understand social behaviour, one must 'get inside' the individual to see the world as the individual perceives it (Carter and Fuller, 2016:934)

The basic tenets of symbolic interactionism state that: (1) individuals act based on the meanings objects have for them, (2) interaction occurs within a particular social and cultural context in which physical and social objects (persons), as well as situations, must be defined or categorized based on individual meanings, (3) meanings emerge from interactions with other individuals and with society, and (4) meanings are continuously created and recreated through interpreting processes during interaction with others (Carter and Fuller, 2016:932).

#### **2.4.1 Meaning of objects to individuals**

Symbolic interactionism, in contrast to the traditional top-down approach, seeks to understand the operation of society from the 'bottom up,' moving attention to micro-level processes that develop during face-to-face encounters to explain the operation of society. At its core, the idea is that individuals use language and significant symbols when communicating with others (Carter and Fuller, 2016:932). Blumer emphasized that the self emerges from an interactive process of joint action in which individuals engage in 'mind action'. While engaged in mindful action, individuals manipulate symbols and negotiate the meaning of situations (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933).

Meanings are intersubjective and perceived, and individuals constantly reinterpret them. There is no fundamental meaning in people or objects with which an individual interacts; instead, people place meanings on objects that they perceive to be unique. Consequently, this behaviour is simply an actor's unique way of reacting to an

interpretation of a situation (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933). This is why comprehending social behaviour necessitates an interpretive perspective that investigates how behaviour changes, is unpredictable and unique to each social encounter (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933).

To provide an example of people's perspectives on objects (symbols) in everyday life in action, this thesis references a paper by Becker (1953), who provided an interactionist perspective on becoming a marijuana user. It explains how "feeling high" when using marijuana is a social construction rather than a physiological, internal motivational state caused by the drug (Carter and Fuller, 2016:938). Becker discovered that in marijuana users, feeling high necessitates both the presence and recognition of the drug's symptoms, which are constructed socially through interactions with others (Carter and Fuller, 2016:938). It demonstrated how role behaviours are socialized and learned through interactions with others. Moreover, Becker's marijuana study influenced symbolic interactionists and sociology because it challenged and broadened the boundaries of what was considered acceptable for a long-term study. To date, the study is regarded as progressive because it inspired researchers to investigate unique and obscure occurrences creatively, as well as to invest fervently in other understudied topics that were previously considered taboo (Carter and Fuller, 2016:938).

Another example associated with the topic of research regarding the dynamics of power within "controlled spaces" is Estes and Edmonds (1981), who used symbolic interactionist ideas in policy research, implying that they could be used to understand power relations, specifically why those in higher-status positions are more successful in defining situations to assert dominance. These scholars demonstrated that interactionist theory is useful for policy research in formulating policies through negotiation in a structural context, implementing policies by accentuating multiple interpretations of policy intent, and influencing meaning for those subject to the policies (Carter and Fuller, 2016:942).

#### **2.4.2 Meaning, fulfilling an everyday purpose**

As stated in the previous chapter, listening to selected music requires some level of control. A body of psychological research has demonstrated that control (even the perception or illusion of control) mediates various aspects of health and well-being, including responses to stress and pain (Krause, North, and Hewitt, 2014:307). This is because listening to music from one's collection has been shown to significantly increase a person's perceived control over painful stimuli while also reducing anxiety. Concerning pain and stress, it has been proposed that the sense of control and the distraction of one's attention may provide theoretical explanations for music's benefit to well-being (Krause et al., 2014:307). Thus, "music taste in action" is prevalent in observable contexts where it functions as an individual agency (Cos, 2018:2). Therefore, in a mundane context, music may influence one's perceptions and reactions because the degree of control will vary (Krause et al., 2014:307).

Furthermore, through music control and "taste in action" an individual's identity gradually grows. Identity comes from the outside, not the inside; it is something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover. Personal identity is, therefore, the accomplishment of a storyteller, rather than the attribute of a character (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:122). Music constructs our sense of identity through the direct experiences it offers of the body, time, and pleasantness, experiences that enable us to place ourselves in imaginative cultural narratives because it incorporates bodily practices and aesthetics (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:124).

## **2.5 Example of music's use in everyday life**

With the many functions and options music listening gives to individuals, the focus turns briefly to music's use regarding emotions and mood only.

### **2.5.1 Emotions and mood**

Psychological and empirical studies into the uses of music suggest that individuals, the youth especially, use music for impression management, i.e. to create an external image for others. Meaning music may help individuals consolidate their sense of

identity by establishing in-group preference and exclusivity (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2007:176).

Mehrabian and Russell (1974) asserted that people's interpretation of any interaction with their contextual surroundings usually results in the variations of three factors, namely pleasure, arousal, and dominance (the "PAD dimensions"). Pleasure–displeasure refers to a valence feeling state (intrinsic appeal or repulsion); arousal refers to the extent to which one feels stimulated, alert, or active in an environment; and dominance refers to the extent to which one controls one's environment (Krause and North, 2017:2).

Lastly, listening to music can bring back vivid and emotional memories of lifetime periods and events. This capacity for cueing autobiographical memories may be facilitated both by the frequency with which many people listen to music and by the tradition in many cultures of coupling music to significant lifetime events (Jakubowski and Ghosh, 2021:649).

## **2.6 Digitization of music**

Living in a digitally advanced age means that technology has made music consumption easier and faster, and it is quickly accessible to people of all social classes. Various streaming platforms, including YouTube Music, Spotify, and Apple Music, provide regular and daily passage to popular local artists such as Brenda Fassie, Sjava, Kabza De Small, De Mthuda, MFR Souls, and Kelvin Momo, as well as international acts, the likes of Drake. Essentially, digitization has changed how we carry out many everyday activities. Technological advancement, especially the progression of portable sound devices, the contexts in which recorded music may be heard, and the uses of music, are more numerous and diverse than years before (Herbert, 2016:10).

As a result, people have many more opportunities to integrate music into their daily lives, and into situations where it was previously not available (Krause, North and Hewitt, 2015:155). Moreover, continuously improving technology gives people considerable control over the music that they listen to, even in public places (Krause

et al., 2015:156). New music technologies give people increased choice and control over what music they can listen to and how they can integrate this music into their daily lives (Krause et al., 2015:158).

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Instead of just being a commodity, music can now be viewed as a resource. Listening contexts ultimately determine the value of the musical experience to the individual listener. People use it consciously and actively in various situations at various levels of engagement. One's identity as mentioned above does not come from within a person, instead, external factors influence how an individual perceives themselves, in that way deciphering who they are exclusively in the world, a continuous everyday experience.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical approaches to music in everyday life**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Music has been a part of our lives for many years, and it has managed to influence people from all over the world at the same time. What a phenomenon! Everyone, hypothetically speaking, has experienced being struck by the sheer beauty of music, suddenly finding oneself in tears, unsure whether they are of joy or sadness, and then quickly feeling the sensation of the beautiful or a great stillness from within. The experience is unmistakably distinct and unique for each individual because of the profound effects it has on them, which are undeniably euphoric. DeNora (2000:157) argues that "music provides the new cultural material used by individuals to exercise agentive control over mood, meaning, experience 'virtual' possibilities, and possibly articulate identity."

Ansdell (2016:51) echoes the words of Paul Nordoff and Clive Robbins, "Music is a world." Each of us has our own experiences in the world. The listener can experience infinite depths, varieties, and facets of music (Ansdell, 2016:51). Furthermore, John Blacking refers to music as a "human experience" (Ansdell, 2016: 51). The statements above imply that there are numerous reasons people listen to music, which this study seeks to uncover. Do we listen to music to reminisce or make plans, as a coping strategy, an accompaniment to daily life and tasks, or simply for the enjoyment it provides? The reasons are many, and the purpose of this study is to highlight the variety of explanations for why people (individuals to be specific) in society choose to listen to music in their daily lives on an intra-personal level. Everyday life theory will be used in the study, as well as symbolic interactionism.

### **3.2 Context**

DeNora (2000) is the leading sociologist who inspired this thesis because she discusses musical meaning and individual identity. Employing interviews and observation, she discovers that people create an identity (a "me") by using music to mark and keep track of significant aspects of their daily lives, such as memorable events, and evolving relationships, as well as to guide how they negotiate activities like driving and shopping (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16).

The concept of "everyday life" is associated with the quotidian, such as the 'taken-for-granted, the banal, the convivial, the familiar, the mundane, the known, and the ordinary' (Helliker, Chiweshe, Bhatasara, and Mwonzora, 2021:3). These are the terms used to describe the repetitive activities and practices that people engage in daily in their "micro-situatedness". These activities may appear insignificant initially, but with continued receptivity over time, they eventually form the basis for the existence of social life (keeping in mind that both the present and the past are embodied in everyday life) (Helliker et al., 2021:3).

When combined with the opportunities that objects (music via gadgets) provide, they eventually manifest into action. Action is structured through engagement with objects (DeNora, 2007:276). As a result, this thesis will investigate how people in Makhanda use music. At the level of listening experience, music appears to be infused with affect, whereas at the level of analysis, it appears to be perpetually capable of eluding attempts to specify what kind of meaning music holds and how it affects its listeners. Furthermore, previous research on music in everyday life has almost entirely focused on Western topics, with very few exceptions (Carl and Kutsidzo, 2016:30). As a result, this thesis hopes to contribute to and further expand the existing body of knowledge on music in everyday life, particularly within a South African context.

### **3.3 Theoretical frameworks**

#### **3.3.1 Everyday life**

De Certeau, Jameson, and Lovitt (1980), who "dedicated their work to the ordinary man (sic)," (given the sexist wording) introduce an intriguing perspective of everyday life through the cohabitation of the "dominant" class and the "dominated" class. The dominant are the capitalists, accused of stealing or retrieving material for profit, and using machines for their ends (De Certeau et al., 1980: 3). The dominant powers exploit the order of things. In the same places where machines rule, the dominated must serve. As a result, the dominant deceives for the pleasure of inventing gratuitous products intended solely to signify the know-how gained through their work and responds to the fellowship of workers with a gift, namely wages. As previously stated, the dominated are the ordinary people. Workers who subtract time from the factory

(rather than goods, as only scraps) seek work that is free, creative, and precisely without profit (De Certeau et al., 1980: 3).

The application of this concept to the study is appropriate because the restaurant servers (individuals) are ordinary people, who are confined within the employment relation they have with their employers. An employment relationship is defined loosely as a legal contract or agreement between an employer and an employee. Employees perform work or services under specific conditions and are subject to the employer's rules through a contract in exchange for compensation. According to De Certeau, modern capitalism is a total system that is organized and structured systematically to serve dominant interests, in which the dominant "produce" and the ordinary man (dominated) "consume" (Helliker et al., 2021:4). Therefore, total systems inherently employ strategies to control the subordinate group, to which the "inferior" responds with tactics.

### **3.3.2 Strategy and Tactics**

In the words of De Certeau et al. (1980:5), strategy is "the calculus (or manipulation) of relations of force that becomes possible whenever a subject of will and power (a business enterprise, an army, a city) can be isolated." The strategy assumes a location that can be defined as proper and serves as the foundation for managing relationships with external targets or threats (clients, competitors, and enemies). Strategic rationalization begins by identifying its proper place concerning an environment that is the source of its power and will (De Certeau et al., 1980: 5).

Establishing and controlling space entails accessing and creating an appropriate place, which yields the following effects: first, the proper place is a victory of place over time. It enables one to capitalize on acquired advantages, plan for future expansions, and establish an independent relationship with the unpredictability of circumstances. The second aspect is a visionary mastery of spaces, the partition of space allows for a panoptic practice in which the dominant transforms strange spaces into objects that can be observed and measured, allowing for control in a single vision. Finally, it defines the appropriate power of knowing space by wielding the ability to transform historical uncertainties into readable spaces (De Certeau et al., 1980:5). As stated by Kamete (2013:639), urban authorities (where restaurants are often found) interest in control

over spaces stems from the realization that uncontrolled spatial activities of self-interested actors (individuals) will result in chaos, if not the complete collapse of the urban system (Kamete, 2013:640).

Consequently, the dominated in retribution implements tactics to counter the effects of the dominant class. In the case of this research, the tactic implemented by the dominated group i.e. the restaurant servers would be/is music. Tactics are defined as the calculated action that is determined by the absence of a proper place except in that of the other (De Certeau et al., 1980:6). Helliker et al. (2021:3) concur, stating that tactics may involve resisting and subverting the dominant order, but they frequently involve acts of "getting by" or "making do," as people work the system to live their lives. Tactics have no place except in that of the other. Furthermore, it does not have the means of containing itself in a position of retreat, of anticipation, and of gathering itself. The article describes and considers tactics as "movement in the enemy's field of vision" (De Certeau et al., 1980:6). Music is the perceived tool, or tactic used by restaurant servers to counter the effects of everyday "mundanity", and rule experienced in everyday life.

### **3.3.3 Control**

I propose that music is an enabler or medium that an individual use to exert "control" in their daily lives. According to Krause, North, and Hewitt (2015:158), "control over music experienced in everyday life may promote feelings of well-being, while lack of control over such may detract from well-being." Everyday life is an element that anchors music in people's subjectivities and provides the setting for experiencing its effects. Tia DeNora (2000) demonstrates how people use music as a resource for their daily activities and cognitive processes (Nowak, 2016:42). The connection between music and everyday life is widely accepted because it contextualizes and mediates any type of interaction with the sound of music (Nowak, 2016: 42). Essentially, the paper aims to explain why people use music in their daily lives, regardless of the environment they find themselves in. This could be in their personal life (leisure), professional life, or social life.

It is argued that self-selected music is beneficial to experiencing positive emotions because it also provides a greater sense of control over the situation (Krause et al.,

2015:158). Furthermore, the value of music in people's daily lives is determined by the ways they use it and the extent to which they engage with it, both of which are influenced by the contexts in which they listen to it (North, Hargreaves, and Hargreaves (2004: 41). As such, the thesis will investigate how music has functioned in the life of ordinary man, given the dilemmas that one faces daily. Occupying controlled spaces, combined with subjugation to strategic objectives, results in "waiting," an effect on the total system.

### **3.3.4 Waiting**

The subordinate group, when exposed to strong forces, such as dominant-controlled spaces (e.g., restaurants), is inescapably associated with waiting. Waiting occurs in time, which means that time and time frames exist before the subjects that are waiting within them. Waiting, on the other hand, is the creation of time. That is, different modes of waiting produce their temporality, which may (or not) be consistent with other social and natural temporalities (Hage, 2009:7). Thus, waiting indicates that we are engaged in and have expectations from life; that we are anticipating what life will throw at us (Hage, 2009:1). Furthermore, it emphasizes an aspect of life in which the problem of our agency is overlooked (Hage, 2009:2).

For example, waiting for a medical professional's appointment, a restaurant's order to be completed, or a restaurant server waiting for their pay (wages from the employer) all require a high level of passivity. Passivity implies that "things are beyond our control, out of our hands," and that we can only wait for what we want to happen rather than actively doing something to make it happen (Hage, 2009:2). Waiting is influenced by both the person waiting and those who provide what they are waiting for (Hage, 2009:3). Consequently, waiting is frequently cited as a key indicator of the inefficiency of certain institutions, such as trade unions (Hage, 2009:3).

Music becomes a model of the intersubjectivity that constitutes the everyday in music sociology, which derives aspects from the interactionist tradition (Nowak, 2016:51). An adequate theory of everyday life allows us to investigate music's effects and meanings, as well as individuals'-controlled agencies and the bases on which they use them (Nowak, 2016:51). As a result, DeNora (2000) suggested a variety of ways in which

music can be used including the creation of the scenes, routines, assumptions, and events that make up social life. This is because people use music to give meaning to their lives and the world around them (Roy, Dowd, 2010:11).

### **3.4 Symbolic interactionism**

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework and perspective in everyday life sociology that examines how society is created and maintained through repeated interactions between individuals (Carter and Fuller, 2015:1). Herbert Blumer (the Chicago School) coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and was the first to develop Mead's philosophically based social behaviourism ideas into a cohesive sociology theory (Carter and Fuller, 2015:2). It moved away from perspectives that (perhaps) provided over-socialized views of the individual in favour of viewing the individual as agentic, autonomous, and integral in the creation of their social world (Carter and Fuller, 2015:1).

The idea that people communicate with others through language and significant symbols is central to symbolic interactionist beliefs. Rather than addressing how common social institutions define and impact individuals, symbolic interactionists focus on the interpretation of subjective perspectives and how individuals make sense of their world from their unique perspectives (Carter and Fuller, 2015:1). This means that interactionists concentrate less on objective structure. Blumer emphasized how the self emerges through an interactive process of joint action. Blumer, like Mead, saw individuals as engaged in "mind action," humans do not ponder on themselves and their relationships with others sometimes, instead they are constantly engaged in mindful action in which they manipulate symbols and negotiate the meaning of situations (Carter and Fuller, 2015:2).

Therefore, meanings are intersubjective and perceived, and they are constantly reinterpreted by individuals. There are no inherent meanings in the people or objects with which an actor interacts; instead, actors assign meanings to entities that are perceived as unique (Carter and Fuller, 2015:2). For example, Blumer defines behaviour as an actor's unique reaction to an interpretation of a situation (Carter and Fuller, 2015:2). Scholars in the social sciences and humanities demonstrate that meaning is found not only in the content of media goods but also in the interactions

between audiences and content (Roy and Dowd, 2010:18). As a result, the purpose of this thesis will further investigate people's perceptions or meanings of music.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

This chapter discussed the theoretical frameworks for the research, as well as the objectives developed to guide the research in investigating music in everyday life. Music is more than just a meaningful or conversational medium; it goes beyond nonverbal communication to convey meaning. It has an impact on everyday life, as discussed in the review chapter. It also appears in all aspects of social agency, including the labour force (restaurants, stores, and banks). As a result, acknowledging the power of music indicates an awareness of its potential to influence (to some extent) an individual's daily life, a phenomenon that academia should encourage further research into, which this paper intends to do.

## **Chapter 4: Interpreting music in everyday life**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter seeks to interpret information derived from participants and contextualize it with reviewed literature. The research intended to provide in-depth explorations of restaurant servers' (individuals) use of music in everyday life, how they interact with it, and what it means to them, on an intra-level of analysis. After concluding data collection, it was evident that indeed music bears more positive qualities to individuals. Moreover, music to date is still greatly integrated into many of our tasks and activities in everyday life. It continues to equip, mediate, and enable individuals' everyday practices, which in turn also caters to the needs of each person to person.

This analysis will be divided into seven sections namely: music consumption, why "I" listen to music, tasks and activities, music accompanies, music's attractive nature, musical experience, associating musical experiences, self in music, and finally idiosyncratic importance, and their accompanying sub-themes. The analysis is guided by the theory of everyday life and symbolic interactionist perspective; the analysis hopes to adequately express participants' everyday use of music and further understand what exactly music means to them.

The interviewees consisted dominantly of black participants and one interracial participant. Their ages ranged between 23-26 years. The pseudonyms chosen by participants included names like Ayanda, Malebo, Babalwa, Vuyolwethu, Roszak, Thomo, Thato, Nozibusiso, Xolelwa, and Edwin. All the participants were employed as restaurant servers, working, and residing in Makhanda. Moreover, some of the participants working in the various restaurants in Makhanda also mentioned they were university-attending students and other work on the side, so when answering questions, they responded according to the best social setting or context that made the most sense for them i.e. at work, home or in public.

### **4.2 Music consumption**

Starting the chapter, participants were asked how regularly they listened to music and to also provide a rough estimated number of hours they dedicated listening to music more generally. Many of the participants agreed that they listen to music regularly, with

it lasting between 15 minutes and 20 hours. The responses were versatile, some participants described listening as a part of their everyday life, while one participant described it as a “rare” occurrence.

#### **4.2.1 Everyday consumption**

Musical consumption among individuals will always vary depending on the value of music in their daily lives, how people decide to make different uses of it, and the degree to which they engage with it dependent on the contexts in which they hear it (North, Hargreaves, and Hargreaves, 2004:41).

*Ayanda, a 23-year-old black woman described listening to music “every day for 4 hours.”*

*Vuyolwethu (black, 21-year-old) stated that she listened for about “6 hours.”*

*Roszak (black, 24-year-old) agreed to “everyday” music listening, roughly for about “20 hours.”*

*For Thomo (black, 25-year-old), he stated he listened to music “every day, for about 20 hours, when I wake up, before I go to sleep, during the day,” he said.*

*Thato (black, 26-year-old) also regularly listened to music for an average of “1 hour 30 minutes to 2 hours.”*

*Nozibusiso (black, 24-year-old) expressed herself by voicing “sometimes, on a day-to-day basis, listening to music for 2 hours or 30 minutes when occupied.”*

*Xolelwa (black 24-year-old), a student and part-time waitress described listening to music “all the time for 15 hours.”*

*Edwin (mixed, 25-year-old) stated he regularly listens to music for about “2 hours.”*

*Babalwa (black, 24-year-old), who only works as a waitress agreed to regular listening sessions with music however, “because now I am working here, I never listen to music, but it usually lasts for 15 hours. Like almost a day.” And on weekends it ranges between “2 and 3 hours.”*

This highlights the aspect of restricted control among the dominated, being subject to the rules of the dominant largely because of the space they occupy, provided by the dominant. Further reviewed in the previous chapter, it explains this occurrence is because of the dominant establishing and controlling a place “space,” translating it into profitable revenue. Estes and Edmonds (1991) imply that those in higher-status positions are successful in defining spaces, ultimately to a degree influencing meaning for those subject to their policies (Carter and Fuller, 2016:942). Moreover, from a social aspect, this may in part be due to the expectations and micro-social norms produced by the formalities and institutions created by the dominant inevitably shaping the character of their counter’s behaviour. Due to this reflexivity, interaction is both voluntary and structured (though not fully determined) (Alder et al., 1987:219).

#### **4.2.2 Musical negligence**

Although music for many is seen as an everyday practice, Malebo for instance digresses from the notion of everyday consumption, stating on the “rare occasions” she does listen to it, it is usually for “an hour.”

The 24-year-old, who attends university and works part-time in restaurants explains “*I usually listen to music when other people are around me, people who enjoy music so in order for them to be entertained, I guess we listen to music.*”

For music to take form in our lives, it depends on who makes use of it, which in turn shapes the experience for both individuals and groups because music has a life of its own (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:109). Thus, music, an aesthetic practice, articulates an understanding of both group relations and individuality, based on people’s ethical codes and social ideologies (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:111).

Other research indicates that music (sound having harmony, melody, or rhythm) is reported to be as distracting as noise (unwanted auditory signal or disturbance or facilitating) when it comes to human vigilant performance (Dalton, and Behm, 2007:143). This may also be the case for Malebo, as she states she listens to music when other people are around her.

### 4.3 Why “I” listen to music?

This section provides the essence of the entire research because the objective was to get an understanding or an idea of why people (individuals) listen to music in their everyday lives. Feedback varied between participants, with some sharing similar themes in responses, nonetheless, participants were able to voice their experiences and value behind the narrative of listening to music.

#### 4.3.1 Facilitates individual needs

*“I like music, I feel like music has become a part of my life. So, now everything I do, I have to do it with music. Because I feel like it helps me pass time,”* Ayanda said.

The notion of using music to achieve what you "need" is an everyday discussion of the self, part of the scholarly knowledge that constitutes subjectivity as an object of self-knowledge (DeNora, 2000:50). The need that translates to meaning is intersubjective. Noted in the review chapter, individuals continuously reinterpret meaning. There are no fundamental meanings in the people or objects with which an individual interacts; instead, the actor places meaning on objects that are perceived to be unique. This behaviour is the individual's unique way of reacting to an interpretation of a situation (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933).

#### 4.3.2 Emotions and mood

Thato, (26 years, black woman) stated *“I listen to music because most of the time, it uplifts my mood.”*

Nozibusiso, a 24-year-old student went on to say *“Normally it depends on the mood. So, if I am happy, I reference happy music throughout. If I am sad, I reference sad music throughout. If it's just a normal day, anything can just flow, you understand? So, it just goes with the mood, on how feeling and how I am catching actually, I go with it.”*

[I commented *“So, like a wave for you”*] – author's comment.

To which she replied *“Yeah.... How I am feeling based on that day because you can't be happy every day.”*

One difficulty in assessing the subjective qualities of everyday music listening experiences is that they may not be pre-planned emotionally coded, or tagged, hence they lack memorability (Herbert, 2016:8). Therefore, it is easier to note the function of music in everyday life with how music as a utilitarian resource can be used to regulate behaviour and mood in different situations (Herbert, 2016:8). It is asserted that people's interpretation of any interaction with their contextual surroundings results in the variations of three factors, namely pleasure, arousal, and dominance (the "PAD dimensions"). Pleasure–displeasure refers to a valence feeling state (intrinsic appeal or repulsion); arousal refers to the extent to which one feels stimulated, alert, or active in an environment; and dominance refers to the extent to which one controls one's environment (Krause and North, 2017:2).

#### **4.3.3 Influences perception in a social setting**

Babalwa, a 24-year-old woman, went on to explain *"Uhm, I listen to music to because music is so good. Music can change the way I think about the world. Music can relax your muscles and just distress."*

She further stated *"Yes, I do enjoy listening to music because music uhm can change the way I think, the way I perceive the world around me, even if I feel angry, that can change. Yes, can sometimes motivate me too if I feel good or bad days. Sometimes it inspires me to be cool."*

In a similar light, Vuyolwethu stated she listens to music *"because it is fun to listen to it and just to calm myself in a stressful situation. Just for calming."*

Roszak, a producer, student, and part-time restaurant server said *"I listen to music because it gives me a sense of safety, included by the fact, I make music myself, so I grab inspiration from music in order to create the stuff I want to create. But overall I'd like to say that it is because it gives me, uhm a high... a non-drug related high."*

Seen in the review chapter, Becker's (1953) study through an interactionist perspective on becoming a marijuana user explains how "feeling high" when using marijuana is a social construction rather than a physiological, internal motivational state caused by the drug. It demonstrated how role behaviours are socialized and learned through interactions with others (Carter and Fuller, 2016:983).

Roszak further stated *“It does depend on what I am listening to. Because uhm, the older I have gotten, the pickier I become with what I listen to because there’s certain sounds that I prefer not to, in a sense pollute my mind with. I’m not sure if you have heard of this but there’s a, err., the music industry standard used to be a 436Hz...For like the sound that would be very suitable that is called the spiritual sound.. the one that attacks the brain and calms your nerves. Ahh, nowadays it is at ... uhm, 340. Which doesn’t seem like a lot, but it is quite a bit. Cause those extra decuples, those attack the brain, that’s trap, your Travis Scotts, your boom boom boom... Yeah yeah, I try my best to keep it to the previous industry standard.”*

It is noted here that age translates the type of music individuals listen to, underlining music’s unique ability to accommodate a person’s needs according to its tonality, rhythm, and more. DeNora (2000:62) also compares music to water in the way individuals organize their bodily actions. This is because music consists of “sound waves, vibrations that the body may feel even when it cannot hear” (Nowak, 2016:46). Essentially people use music because it affords bodily processes to participate in social settings and therefore can be used in return as a device for organizing the body (Nowak, 2016:46).

#### **4.3.4 Facilitates focus**

Xolelwa, a black woman explained *“I don’t know man; it just keeps me busy; it gives me something to do. Like I don’t necessarily have one of those deep reasons like I listen to it when I am sad. I just always listen to music, it more or less keeps me focus on something, I guess.”*

[I commented, *“so, it gives you that focus.”*]- author’s comment.

She agreed stating *“Yes, because I am very fidgety, with everything I do I tend to just zone out, so it directs my focus and its nice.”*

Similarly for Edwin, a 25-year-old man said *“to get going I would say, it gets me moving I would say. It helps me keep active and concentrate in what I am doing at the time.”*

It is argued that self-selected music is beneficial to experiencing positive emotions because it also provides a greater sense of control over the situation (Krause et al., 2015:158). Further influencing the contexts in which they listen to it (North, Hargreaves, and Hargreaves (2004: 41).

He further added *“Oh yes, I do enjoy my music.”*

Referring to “my music” indicates the element of control over music listening, fundamentally he does not own the rights to the music but theoretically, he controls the influence music has on him.

Psychological research demonstrated that control (even the perception or illusion of control) mediates various aspects of well-being, including responses to stress and pain (Krause, North, and Hewitt, 2014:307). This is because listening to music from one's collection has been shown to significantly increase a person's perceived control over stimuli while also reducing anxiety (Krause et al., 2014:307). Consequently, “music taste in action” functions as an individual agency (Cos, 2018:2).

#### **4.4.4 Enjoyment**

Thomo, a black man describes *“Ehh for enjoyment, and it is also quite therapeutic at the same time you know. It is almost like shutting down the noise from the rest of the world. So much happening so yeah.”*

The choice over music listening leads to more positive outcomes, evidence suggest that music accompanied by higher degrees of choice was associated with positive emotional change and unchosen music experienced in public was met with discontent and dislike (Krause et al., 2015:158).

#### **4.5 Tasks and activities music accompanies**

This section of the paper discusses how the participants have described using music to accompany some of the tasks and activities they usually perform daily. It dives into the various, yet similar paths individuals embark on every day.

##### **4.5.1 Music, an accompaniment to tasks**

*“I use music for almost everything shame, walking, showering and when I am working, doing my work, because I feel like as if there’s something that’s playing nje [just] in my ears. I tend to focus well because if I don’t do that, I will think about something else and get distracted. So, I just listen to music,”* Ayanda said.

More generally, all participants use music within their everyday contexts. From waking hours to nighttime, music continues to play a role in accompanying participants in their daily tasks and activities.

Due to the repetitive nature of responses, participant’s answers were compacted into and ranged from:

*“Showering, doing chores cleaning or washing dishes when I’m hanging out with my friends,”* for Malebo.

*“Do my laundry, while cooking listening to music even here at work... ja, I’m working, uhm at the same time listening to music,”* for Babalwa. [Assuming the music played in restaurants- authors note].

*“For sleeping and sometimes for studying,”* Vuyolwethu said.

*“You know when I’m going for a walk,”* Thomo referenced.

For Xolelwa, she listens to music *“when I am exercising...these days I don’t even like speaking to people. I just have my headsets on and I listen to music (laughing), so that’s pretty much it.”*

Finally, Edwin described using music when *“I am at the gym. I am playing music. When I am moving from one place to the other, I am playing music.”*

As suggested in the literature review, music and everyday life are intimately linked because the variables of each facilitate the experiences that people have. Music accompanies people throughout their daily lives and mediates their experiences with daily contexts (Nowak, 2016:44). Hence, music is listened to according to how individuals connect with it and spread it in different contexts This is because individuals interpret various pieces of music as potential accompaniments to their daily lives through a gradual process of spreading or diffusing music into the various contexts of life (Nowak, 2016:45).

## 4.6 Music's attractive nature

This section of the paper discusses what individuals would describe as the attracting nature or drawing effect of music. What is it about music that makes them want to listen to it, essentially highlighting its alluring or attracting nature to participants. In this section participants found it difficult finding words that could properly articulate and communicate their feelings here.

### 4.6.1 Emotions and mood

Babalwa, a student and part-time restaurant server stated *“sometimes, it depends with the music I just want to listen to. Let’s say I want to listen to Chris Brown cause it has been ringing on my mind like that but it depends on my mood.”*

[Chris brown, American artist- author’s note].

*In the same breath, Vuyolwethu (a South African black woman) said “I choose it based on my feelings.”*

*Nozibusisio, a 24-year-old woman expressed “its way of the mood; how I feel that day. Sometimes I wake up with love songs, sometimes I wake up with amapiano. So, it just depends on the mood, if its gospel it can be gospel, yah it depends on the mood.”*

[Amapiano, South African genre of music - note by author].

*Malebo, 24-year-old black woman also said “it depends on my mood. I feel like even though I rarely listen to music when I do listen to music it’s because I’m feeling something. So, let’s say on a Sunday morning I am feeling grateful, I’d listen to gospel music. If I’m doing my chores and I’m feeling tired, I would listen to something more mellow to accommodate my mood.”*

Lastly, for Thato she explained *“It depends on my mood. If I feel like jumping around and being happy... I listen to loud...yah, loud music and if I am not in a good mood, I listen to calm, uhm... music.”*

Certain aspects of music governed either by genre, tone, melody, lyrics, and so on, provide templates through which individuals can explore and/or express emotions, and

musical meaning. One's uniqueness is ultimately a product of highly individualized investment in the subsequent interpretation of texts (Nowak, 2016:46). Moreover, seen in the literature review chapter, it is suggested that the uses of music among individuals, the youth especially, could use music for impression management, i.e. to create an external image and act emotions for others. Meaning music may help individuals consolidate their sense of identity by establishing in-group preference and exclusivity (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2007:176).

#### **4.6.2 Individual purposes**

Roszak, a male student who also works parttime said "I think, long story short... my mindset at the time, my mindset at the time is a pivotal factor in why I decide to listen to a specific album or artist or a song in general."

For Thomo, also a male student, and producer working parttime, went on to say "*it is definitely, the production. So, I always start off with the production, just listen to the different elements of the song itself that pretty much draws me into a lot of music, even like, I can draw music even like video games for an example. There are a lot of sounds that I am interested in, you know. Not to say I'm not interested in the lyrics. But it is because like I produce and stuff like that. I am always considering the beat first and then everything follows after.*"

Nozibusiso, a 24-year-old lady said "*you know sometimes you catch other people's waves. I'll make an example, my flatmate she plays Rihanna. So, she wakes up feeling like Rihanna, I wake up...it just depends on my mood again. Cause sometimes you might want to listen to soul than you go with your body. Sometimes the body just wants to rest and not want to jump up and down, just want to sit down. For me its lyrics and beat but if you get the beat right and the lyrics correlate than you are in.*"

Thato (26 years/black), stated "*oh... I think I go for a specific melody.*"

The elements mentioned above by the participants i.e. melody, lyrics and production all incorporate qualities of sound that characterize music. Harmony, tone color, form, and melody are the same qualities that structure a musical symbol for understanding the nuances in everyday interactions (Vannini, and Waskul, 2006:6).

[Xolelwa's response combined all the sub-themes, which was difficult to interpret but not impossible -author's note].

Xolelwa, a student and parttime worker explained *"its everything. So firstly, I told you that I listen to one genre right, Afro-beats so... even if I don't like the song but if its Afro-beats I listen to the song. I think I have more or less conditioned my mind...I grew up listening to Afro-beats because my step-dad is Nigerian, so I have conditioned my mind, if its Afro-beats its nice. Whether its actually not nice, we are going to listen to it until I like it. But then with other songs, sometimes it's the beat, I think most of the time it's the beat unless I wouldn't necessarily hear the lyrics before the beat, you hear the beat before the lyrics. Unless if someone tells you about the song. Firstly, if the beat is nice then I'm like 'ooh okay, the beat is nice' and then you listen to the lyrics, and depending on where you are, if you are walking you won't even concentrate but if you sitting you and you are in your elements and you think actually it's a nice song. So, I think it's really all the different elements also. So maybe let's say you are at home, and you see a music video and you like the pictures, so its different element at different times. But the first thing that draws you is the beat and tempo. I think that also depends on genre, with piano it would be beating obviously its more beat than lyrics. If it's an RnB it will depend on what type of song it is, is it a heartbreak song, is it a love song, so I think its situational, it depends."*

[Afro-beats, West African genre of music – author's note].

With Xolelwa, it is noted that the outside environment (home) somewhat influenced her taste in music, she slowly ingested Afro-beats because of one of her parents who comes from West Africa. Identity tends to come from the outside, not the inside; it is something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover character (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:122). Here we see that music listening practices take place in everyday contexts characterized by the systemic and structural processes to which they respond (Nokwak, 2016:43). As a result, they are constrained by their everyday contexts while remaining emotionally reflexive about the range of options available to them within each of these contexts (Nokwak, 2016:43). Everyday life that encompasses a structural and mundane component helps situate modes of music consumption, explaining their modalities and the reasons why individuals engage in them (Nowak, 2016:43). When the same music is used in different contexts, it can have substantially

different effects. Therefore, understanding what music can do and enable requires recognition of its sociocultural context. In this way, music as a mode of interaction expresses and constitutes social relations (Roy and Dowd, 2010:5).

#### 4.6.3 Digitization of music

Edwin, a 25-year-old man expressed that *“of late how I find new music, I pick a song, especially with algorithm and AI these days, I pick a song that is a throwback and normally in this YouTube music. I don’t pick the next song, it just gives me a song to what I just listened too or had a similar vibe, so then I pick up new tracks. So, it’s not really a me thing, its technology doing its thing these days. Back in the day, I would sit on Trace, and I like a certain artist, and then I try find out what other...nah I just go with what AI gives me these days, I won’t lie.”*

[I commented *“so, would you say AI is improving or recking that...that ability to pick a song for you?”*]

He responded saying *“I would say yes because I have become lazy, especially because it’s something I used to do. Sit down and watch tv...watch Trace you know and watch the top ten playlist to try and pick up something that I like, but these days I am lazy. Technology has been doing it so now I just download a playlist. I see three songs I like out of say ten and then maybe I like the rest, I just go for it because I trust technology too much.”*

Could one therefore argue whether artificial intelligence (AI) is steering away the aspect of control (power) from individuals, the same qualities that make the experience as valuable (i.e. selecting process, meaning), or does the value remain existent, just enhanced?

Similarly, Thomo (25-year-old man) stated *“I will probably start like with my favourite artist, but then there are times, where I try to find different styles and expand from like a playlist. I listen to a lot of YouTube. Uhm, I like music on YouTube, so it almost compiles like an algorithm for you. If you play like a jazz song, it will go to other types of jazz songs.”*

On the same note, Xolelwa adds on, stating *“I don’t necessarily choose a song, the only time I choose a song is if I heard it from someone, then I am like ‘okay I want to listen to it more’. But usually, I just go on Spotify and I...you know how they create playlists for you on Spotify, so yeah I just listen to that. So, I rarely choose...Spotify has kind of figured out what I listen too, and they choose for me, so yah.”*

It is argued that through music control and music taste in action, an individual’s identity gradually grows. Identity comes from the outside not the inside; it is something we put or try on, not something we reveal or discover. Personal identity is therefore the achievement of a storyteller, rather than the attribute of a character (Hall and Du Gay, 2006:122). However, if left in the hands of AI, does AI then continue the storytelling process, and it is still as authentic?

Technological advancements have provided more opportunities to integrate music into our daily lives, and into situations where it was previously not available (Krause, North and Hewitt, 2015:155). It enables people to carry their music libraries with them wherever they go, permitting them access to altering their everyday soundscape (Carl, and Kutsidzo 2016:30). Does AI blur this soundscape? Seemingly, however, participants commented positively, stating it improves the experience but made them [“lazy”-Edwin], therefore one can only assume that it enhances the musical experience.

## **4.7 Musical experience**

In this section, the thesis tackles how individuals have described their own musical experiences with music or when they listen to music more generally in their everyday lives.

### **4.7.1 Affords space and state of mind**

Babalwa (black/woman), said “sometimes, I just feel like I want to be alone and just be in a quiet space. I just want to listen to music just nje [just], just to think.”

Nozibusiso, a student and waitress *“so music just blocks me from trying to interact with people. Because the main focus is on my ears, so as I walk, I am not frightened*

*because I have another mind in my ears. So social anxiety does play a part, so you just want to pop your headphones and go about your day but with your music on. Forget about the outside world, you are inside right now, you are living in your world right now. So that's how I look at it."*

Similarly, with Xolelwa also a student and waitress, she said *"it makes me feel like 'I'm that girl' (laughing). Especially I think...guys get headsets because you are literally here, and you are walking, and there's people but you're singing, and you feel like you are performing. It it it ...I don't know how to put it into words. Like I'm performing."*

[I commented *"it gives you main character syndrome."*]-author's comment.

And she answered *"exactly. It gives me Ariana Grande and Coachella and I am performing. Especially...I mean there's different song and different songs has different beats and typos, when I go up and go down it makes me feel good. It gives a confidence boost here and there; you know those types of songs. It makes me feel like 'I'm that girl' really. Like it just keeps me at my own bubble, the same as the library, there's different people and pressure around, so it just keeps me in my own bubble. It just creates a bubble around me."*

In mundane contexts, how music is encountered may influence one's perceptions and reactions to it, because the degree of control fluctuates (Krause et al., 2014:307). Krause et al., (2014:307) found that positive mood change is greatest when individuals exercise choice, further suggesting that negative emotions would be more with unchosen music. Research indicated that listening to personal music on MP3 players for instance could make their situation more tolerable. Moreover, it was noted that individuals used music as a diversion from a stressful commute, blocked out the surrounding sounds and that it could create psychological distance from others in crowded public places (Krause et al., 2014:307). This is evidently so, as Xolelwa described her musical experience as "my own bubble," because when she is immersed in this self-imposed bubble, she can focus better. Therefore, choice may be better embodied as a continuum (Krause et al., 2014:307).

Rosazk (24-year-old man) stated *“music does help me calm my anxiety. Whenever I do face anxiety. Uhm, it also makes me more productive, depending on the type of music that I am listening to.”*

Thato, a student, and waitress expressed *“it helps me focus when I am doing my work. It helps me progress in my work.”*

Similarly for Edwin like Thato, he said *“it helps me concentrate sometimes because I tend to have a thought then drift off quickly due to a lot of personal reasons that I won’t get into, but when I play music and I hear music from the back I focus on that one thing, and I don’t really drift off... I listen to music like background noise in a way.”*

Thomo enunciated *“it definitely helps like, uhm just getting through the day, you know. Sometimes, it almost feels like the day is a little bit shorter, cause you listening to a lot of music you know. Those two minutes, three minutes kind of add up throughout the day.”*

Therefore, experiencing music in everyday life is seemingly important, given that music is an omnipresent aspect of all human cultures and has been associated with broad psychological functions, especially in emotions, regulation, and coping (Chamorro-Premuzic and Furnham, 2007:175).

#### **4.8 Associating musical experiences**

*“So, when I listen to music especially uhm... old school RnB. It just kind of reminds of... it is very nostalgic to me. It reminds me of the past when I was younger and would listen to old school music with my sibling, my older siblings and those were great times,”* Thato expressed.

#### 4.8.1 Memories and Past Events

As indicated in the literature review chapter, listening to music can bring back vivid and emotional memories of lifetime periods and events. This capacity for cueing autobiographical memories may be facilitated both by the frequency with which many people listen to music and by the tradition in many cultures of coupling music to significant lifetime events (Jakubowski and Ghosh, 2021:649). Most of the participants often recalled close relations they have when listening to certain types of music, either from their childhood or from events with loved ones.

*“I mostly listen to songs from my childhood that brings a lot of memories with my family and all that, so I would say yes. I do associate listening to music with something which is my childhood memories”* says Ayanda.

Likewise, Malebo, a student and waitress said “music triggers a lot of memories with my friends. Or a time period in my life. So, a lot of the times when I hear a traditional Pedi song, it reminds me of my childhood when my parents had a radio in their room, and they used to play those songs. Or when I listen to a certain type of music with my friends then later on when I hear that same type of music, I remember the situation. Jah I can connect certain songs with certain people and memories.”

Roszak (black, male) voiced that *“from time to time. Uhm, unrequited love, we’ve all been there. Sometimes you just listen to your Sharika’s, Beyonce ...Your SZA, yoh yoh [wow wow]... you just get into your feelings and start thinking about unrequited love. It also makes me think about my family. it makes me think about my friends and it makes me feel about. Uhm, where I want to be in the next 5 years of my life and how do I see them looking.”*

Lastly, Thomo vividly states *“ like when you are listening to a song, and you listen to it a few years later, you almost like you can go back to that exact moment where you first listened to it. You can actually pinpoint a lot of memories. Just by listening to music. I think because music is a part of my life, like every day. And there are some songs that do bring back memories, so I think that’s why I tend to associate a lot of songs because I can pinpoint faces and moments I have had with other people through*

*music cause its just one of those... it is like a nice reminder; almost like a time-machine."*

However, Edwin (25 years old) argues *"I don't really try and have people in my life like that, I feel like it's just a me thing, I don't like stressing myself, I don't want to attach myself to certain people. If that person disappears it will ruin the song for me or something like that, I am not trying to interlink. I play music because it gets me going for me, I do have maybe a couple of songs of when I was a kid, I would commemorate with friends like who passed away and stuff, but no I don't really."*

These music listening episodes strongly involve multifaceted experiences, potentially combining emotional arousal with other factors, e.g. inner imagery, associations, and memories (Herbert, 2016:7). Which is why for some like Edwin, opt to not create nor associate musical experiences with people due to life's unpredictability.

#### **4.8.2 Emotions and mood**

Occurrences of listening to music that people tend to remember, discuss with others, and overtly value are commonly, or related to strong involvement within the experiences (Herbert, 2016:7). Hence, the transformative experience with music whether live or recorded remains as a source where attention and emotional arousal are high (Herbert, 2016: 7).

For instance, Thomo states *"it is like a combination... sadness and happiness mixed together, there's some songs that bring memories when you are chilling with your friends. But because you are not really chilling with those friends, like people disappear over time, you know. And happiness comes from the fact that those memories were made and same time, there's sadness, it's like damn you wish you could go back to that time you were having fun or whatever, you know. So, either or."*

#### **4.9 Self in music**

This section of the chapter focuses attention on how music accommodates an individual and how music can be used as a medium for finding self (individuality) among other people.

#### **4.9.1 Relatability**

As emphasized in the literature review chapter, the self emerges from an interactive process of joint action in which individuals engage in 'mind action'. While engaged in mindful action, persons manipulate symbols and negotiate the meaning of situations (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933). Meanings are intersubjective and perceived, and individuals regularly reinterpret them, because there are no fundamental meanings in the people or objects with which an actor interacts; instead, meanings are placed on objects, depending on how individuals perceive it, likely unique (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933).

For instance, Ayanda (black/female) explains *"I need something to relate to. I can't be listening to anything. If going to listen to something, it needs to be something that I feel talks to me or talks about me or ja, something like that because if I am not going to listen to something where there won't be any connection and then I don't think I'd enjoy."*

Roszak says *"I like to find myself from different pieces of Art whether it be music or film. I like to listen to this specific song, album, or artist, in order to reflect on myself essentially."*

Music, perceived as a form of art defines human culture and behaviour that subsequently shapes and narrates how art is perceived (Juslin et al., 2023:193). Hence, music is often used to introduce and replay the temporal structures of a moment (Nowak, 2016:46).

#### **4.9.2 Positive reinforcement**

As seen above and in previous chapters, music positively reinforces individuals' everyday lives. Again, echoing Green (1993:18), the article points out that music gives us emotional as well as mental stimulation. The stimulation is as often the reaction to

music as is relaxation because music is too diverse to permit any definite and single effect.

So Malebo who rarely listens to music highlights that *“for the very few times that I listen to music. I think I listen to music when I feel gratitude, so it makes me feel grateful. I listen to gospel music that is going to bring that grateful feeling.”*

Babalwa said music *“it makes me feel happy, it makes me feel happy and It inspires me, it activates my mood.”* However, she doesn't listen to music that complements her personality.”

Moreover, for Thomo (25-year-old male) he voiced that *“most songs I listen to give me like a good feeling you know, and so I end up having ... I am most likely to have a better day through listening to music cause it up lifts my mood.”*

#### **4.9.3 Aesthetic experience**

As discussed in the literature review chapter, aesthetic experiences involve a unique mode of music listening in which the listener's attention is focused on the music, and one or more aesthetic value standards are, explicitly or implicitly. According to Juslin (2013:246), an "aesthetic experience" occurs when aesthetic criteria are applied to music, or simply, when the listener implements 'an aesthetic attitude', and once a piece of music is considered art, the aesthetic judgment process can begin. As a result, the listener evaluates aspects of music's form and content based on their value as art, so the term "aesthetic experience" appears suitable.

Nozibusiso (24-year-old woman) said *“more generally, I take it as an aesthetic because its different artists that's also sharing what they are feeling at that moment. So, you are taking what they are feeling, and they are feeding it into you. So, if it's a happy song, I go along with the artist, if it's sad, I'll be sad along with the artists because he is expressing himself through his lyrics.”*

Nozibusiso might feel this way because music gets into people through a deliberate meaning-making process. It enters the body with diminutive thought, as when certain musical elements inspire action (e.g., marching or rest) (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16). Consequently, people attach meaning to themselves and their world through music (Roy and Dowd, 2010:11).

As suggested in the literature review chapter, music is something one uses it to find oneself amidst others, especially because people compare themselves to others, imaging how their experiences and perspectives may or may not lead to similar musical preferences (Roy and Dowd, 2010:17).

Musical meaning happens through interaction and makes interaction possible, which ultimately signals and helps constitute the identity of individuals and collectives (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16)

Edwin noted that *“I think I am growing into the music that I play, not really, I wouldn’t say initially because I play a lot of drill, a lot of gangs, killing people, like I don’t identify with that background. But it has opened my mind to a lot of stuff.”*

This indicates how contextual meaning is never solely in the music because there is no single meaning. While some listeners condemn the violence in rap lyrics, limiting the spectrum of lyrics to that meaning; others hear them as signifying a necessary critique, a political rallying cry, and/or an emerging art form (Roy and Dowd, 2010:15). Instead, music and its meanings inform people, quite profoundly, about who they are (Roy and Dowd, 2010:16)

#### **4.10 Idiosyncratic importance of music in everyday life**

Individuals find meaning by connecting text and context through music highlights people’s evolving autobiographies (Roy, Dowd, 2010:16). Music is many things, organized sound, a social construction, a perception, and an external fact that is produced and consumed (Vannin, and Waskul, 2006:6).

#### 4.10.1 Music, the positive symbol in everyday life

A symbol is an arbitrary substitute for something else; a symbol is what allows us to indicate something apart from the actual thing to which the symbol refers (Vannin, and Waskul, 2006:8). Evidently, each respondent gave a reason for music serving a type meaning to them.

*“It helps me a lot, it helps me get through a lot of tasks, it helps get through emotions that can be negative or if I want to feel positive about something. I just listen to music or If I want to elevate my mood,” Ayanda commented.*

For Babalwa *“listening to music is a distress, I can feel that something is missing around me which is music. It also changes the way I perceive the world around me.”*

Vuyolwethu, a student and waitress said *“I think, it is very important for me. I am a person with anxiety, you know. And for me to be calm. And for my anxiety to not take over, I turn to music. I turn to more calming and not the wild part of it. To just calm down, specifically gospel music. It calms me down.”*

*“It is very important because if there was no music, I don’t think I would be able to do anything. I wouldn’t be progressive in anything,” Thato remarked.*

Nozibusiso said *“it heals me. Whatever I’m going through, it heals me. You know in the life we not the only one going through problems. Even our favourite artists have their favourite artists that are healing them. So, there’s a certain element of being better, somewhere.”.*

Lastly, Edwin highlighted music’s importance by stating *“yes. I think so, I know, I know so because if my headphones are like down, I feel it, I feel it. Sometimes I wait for them to charge so that I can get myself going. So, they are like symbolic of the music I play, I do need music.*

[I commented “so, you feel like you can’t go about a single day without listening to music?”].

And he responded saying “I wouldn’t say that, but I think so, I wouldn’t go about my day without the music. So, I would assume that yeah, I can’t.”

There are no fundamental meanings in the people or objects with which an actor interacts; instead, actors place meanings on objects that they perceive to be unique. Consequently, this behaviour is simply an actor's unique way of reacting to an interpretation of a situation (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933). This is why comprehending social behaviour necessitates an interpretive perspective that investigates how behaviour changes, is unpredictable and unique to each social encounter (Carter and Fuller, 2016:933). From the various responses, participants have indicated music’s importance in their lives, to varying degrees all within different social contexts.

#### **4.11 Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrated the complexities involved in music listening regarding individuals on an intra-personal level of analysis. Although this practice cannot freely take place under controlled spaces by the dominant (restaurant owners), it does not take away from the individualistic musical experience people have with music in other social settings, like driving with music or walking with it. Instead, according to how the person incorporates it, the experience evolves into a more enhanced experience, one involving a bodily process. Individuals recognize what music can offer and mean to them, essentially dubbing it a commodity or accompaniment to everyday life.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Overall, the study has been an interesting discovery. The thesis aimed to understand how restaurant servers, more specifically South African individuals use music within their everyday lives or contexts. This research followed a qualitative design, which was guided by the framework of everyday life and symbolic interactionism. These frameworks encouraged the study to focus on the experiences individuals have when associating music with their everyday “mundanity.” Symbolic interactionism especially, allowed the study to view meaning according to the contexts it meant (means) to people. Data collection was executed through face-to-face in-depth interviews with participants, accompanied by an audio recorder.

The term “music lovers” is a vocabulary people use to talk about their relationship with music, often one of attraction, passion, connection, selection, pleasure, cooperation, uncertainty, and more. People devoted to each of these often seek transformation through a close attachment to an animate or inanimate object, of which they combine their passion and connoisseurship with their own needs (Ansdell, 2016:7).

Findings from the research noted that most sub-themes in this chapter revolved around emotions and mood. This indicates that respondents who choose music as part of their care routine to self, are actively engaged in self-conscious articulation, thinking early about the music that might “work” for them (DeNora, 2000:53).

Musical “amateurs” tend to be especially passionate, an amateur being, someone who ‘does it for love’. While professional musicians may love music, it’s amateurs who usually talk about it most enthusiastically (Ansdell, 2016:7).

Hence, acts of love for music are key in understanding the process of music loving. (Ansdell, 2016:7). Moreover, studies of people interacting with music in their everyday lives show how taste, aesthetic pleasure, and other personal and social benefits are usually intertwined (Ansdell, 2016:8).

Nine of the ten participants established that music is a part of their everyday life. From waking times all the way to sleep times, participants described music as being a part of their day-to-day life. The data collected on this was quite versatile and insightful as participants were able to voice exactly how they individually incorporate music into their lives, with some similar reasoning. Though resourceful, some participants could

not explain in-depth how they went about selecting a song or provided brief responses which limited knowledge of the study. However, the gathered data indicated individuals accompany the different tasks with music because it helps them focus, boost attentiveness, avoid people, and relax. All are dictated either by their moods and emotions, the type of task carried out, digital technology, and more. Some responses concur with the work of DeNora (2000:59), who highlighted how music can create environments that “afford concentration” and help them produce the kind of focus they need to carry out mental work like studying or writing, where the term “bubble” is used to explain the state or feeling the music gives them, which essentially allows for “self” to exist within a society and contributes to the type of person they recognize themselves as.

Responses revealed individuals listen to music because it forms part of their life, aids in passing time, enjoyable experience, provides a sort of safety, a mood stabilizer, and generally gets them going. Moreover, the term “bubble” is used to explain the state or feeling the music gives them, which essentially allows for “self” to exist within a society and contributes to the type of person they recognize themselves as.

Furthermore, music is seen as a device that can not only create but also maintain and reawaken memories for participants between their families, friends, love interests, and more. For other participants, associating music with individuals may ruin or take away from the song because of the unforeseeable future individuals inevitably face. Therefore, music can be seen as a “time machine” [Thomo] because it gives participants a chance to move between and in time, ultimately forming core experiences and memories.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Interview Guide Example

#### Interview Schedule

- 1 Do you regularly listen to music?
- 2 Why do you listen to music?
- 3 On average, how many hours per day do you think you spend listening to music?
- 4 Do you enjoy listening to music?
- 5 What are some of the tasks or activities you usually do while listening to music?
- 6 How do you choose a song to listen to when you decide to play music?
- 7 Does listening to music help you with anything in your everyday life (daily life)?
- 8 Would you say music can satisfy certain individual needs either mentally, emotionally, or psychologically?
- 9 How does music make you feel when you listen to it?
- 10 When listening to music, do you associate your feelings with anything or anyone?
- 11 If yes or no above, please explain why.
- 12 What is the distinct (specific) nature of music that draws you into wanting or deciding to listen to a song or music more generally?
- 13 Have there been instances of negative or positive emotions (feelings) such as sadness, disappointment, happiness, or joy where you would find yourself playing music? If so, why?
- 14 Do you listen to music that fits your personality or character?
- 15 If yes above, please explain why.
- 16 Do you think listening to music is important (essential) for you, why?

**Appendix B**  
**PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT DECLARATION**  
**(To be signed by research participant/s)**

**Project Title: *Music in everyday life: An Exploration into the various uses of music among restaurant servers in Makhanda.***

*Andile Sakhile Dlamini* from the Department of Sociology, Rhodes University has requested my permission to participate in the above-mentioned research project.

The nature and the purpose of the research project and of this informed consent declaration have been explained to me in a language that I understand.

I am aware that:

1. The purpose of the research project is to investigate music's active role in the daily lives of restaurant servers living in Makhanda.
2. Rhodes University has given ethical clearance to this research project **2023-7326-7817** and I have seen/may request to see the clearance certificate by contacting the Ethics Coordinator ([ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za))
3. By participating in this research project, the study will contribute towards the body of literature focused on the everyday use of music, especially found in the sociology of everyday life and the sociology of music. Furthermore, it will highlight awareness of the various motives behind people including music in their daily lives.
4. I will participate in the project by reflecting on how music has been instrumental in my life, and the different functions and purposes it serves in everyday life.
5. My participation is entirely voluntary and should I at any stage wish to withdraw from participating further, I may do so without any negative consequences.
6. I will not be compensated for participating in the research, but my out-of-pocket expenses will be reimbursed.

7. There are no risks associated with my participation in this study, as it investigates the various uses of music.
8. The Researcher intends to publish the research results in the form of a soft copy at the Department of Sociology for five years according to the university policy. However, confidentiality and anonymity of records will be maintained, and my name and identity will not be revealed to anyone who has not been involved in the conducting of the research ***unless I indicate to the contrary/recognize that as a public figure, my identity will inevitably be/become known, in which case I agree to accept the loss of anonymity.***
9. In terms of the Protection of Personal Information Act (No. 4 of 2013) it remains my right to request the Researcher to provide me with a detailed explanation of exactly how confidentiality and anonymity of the data I provide will be achieved. I may also request to know exactly how my personal information will be stored securely, and for how long it will be stored.
10. If any data collected from me for this research project is to be used by the Researcher for any further study, I am to be informed in writing and my written consent is requested again. I need not give consent for the new research if it is incompatible with the initial purpose of the present study (POPIA, s15(3)). Equally, I can simply reject the request. In such cases, a formal request needs to be made to me by the researcher via the Ethics Coordinator ([ethics-committee@ru.ac.za](mailto:ethics-committee@ru.ac.za)).
11. In terms of the POPI Act, I possess the right to receive feedback about this research. This will take the form of an email unless ***I elect not to receive this feedback.***
12. Any further questions that I might have regarding the nature of the research and/or my participation in it will be answered by Andile Dlamini using their Rhodes email address: [g22d8365@campus.ru.ac.za](mailto:g22d8365@campus.ru.ac.za)
13. By signing this informed consent declaration, I am not waiving any legal claims, rights, or remedies. A copy of this informed consent declaration will be given to me, and the original will be kept on record by the Researcher.
14. I ***agree/disagree*** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's request to take photographs, or video me as part of this research project, recognizing that agreement here is likely to raise the risk of compromising my anonymity and that steps will be taken to ensure this will not happen if my consent is given.
15. I ***agree/disagree*** (delete inapplicable) to the Researcher's use of voice recording of my comments and opinions during interviews, the purpose of which is to ensure the accurate recording of my views/responses. Furthermore, I have the right to request a

copy of the interview transcriptions to confirm that my opinions are accurately recorded.

I, ....., have read the above information / confirm that the above information has been explained to me in a language that I understand, and I am aware of this document's contents. I have asked all the questions that I wished to ask, and these have been answered to my satisfaction. I fully understand what is expected of me during the research.

I have not been pressurized in any way and I voluntarily agree to participate in the above-mentioned project.

.....

**Participants' signature**

.....

**Witness**

.....

**Date**