Undergraduate Music Students' Perspectives on how their Training Experiences have Affected their Relationship with Music and Potential Implications for Music Therapy

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ABSTRACT

Undergraduate Music Students' Perspectives on how their Training Experiences have Affected their Relationship to Music and Potential Implications for Music Therapy

Isabella Rachiele

Literature indicates that many undergraduate university students face challenges that may have significant impacts on their mental health and well-being. Furthermore, research indicates that undergraduate music students face unique challenges specific to their field of study. As an undergraduate music performance student, the researcher experienced some of these challenges, and as a music therapist, she felt that music therapy held potential to help. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: to understand undergraduate music students' perceptions on how their university music training experiences have changed their relationships with music, and to explore how music therapy could potentially serve as a personal resource for undergraduate music students, specifically with regard to fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music. Three undergraduate music students participated in individual qualitative interviews. A narrative summary of each participant's interview was created. A cross-case analysis of these narrative summaries revealed themes that emerged within three pre-determined categories: (a) university music training experiences perceived as having a positive/helpful impact on participants' relationship with music, (b) university music training experiences perceived as having a negative/unhelpful impact on participants' relationship with music, and (c) participants' perspectives on engaging in music therapy as a way of fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music. Limitations of the study, implications for music therapy practice, education, and advocacy as well as recommendations for future research are presented.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter 1. Introduction

Significance and Need

Setting the Scene

Various studies indicate that undergraduate university students often face specific stressors and challenges. The most commonly cited issues include: financial stress, difficulties with time management, perceived lack of support from faculty and peers, long-distance relationships with loved ones, concerns about gaining employment after graduation, fluctuation in sleep and eating habits, balancing work and school, learning independent living skills, developing new relationships, peer pressure, family expectations, fear of failure, and academic performance (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Porru et al., 2022; Robotham, 2008; Wristen, 2013). These issues can have a significant impact on students' mental health, with a survey conducted by the US National Alliance of Mental Illness indicating that 64% of college students who left school prior to graduation did so due to mental health challenges (Gruttadaro & Crudo, 2012).

Scholarly publications also indicate that undergraduate music students often experience stressors and challenges that are unique to their specific vocational trainings. These include music performance anxiety (Dobos et al., 2019; Kenny, 2011; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Wesner et al., 1990), learning to be disciplined (Wristen, 2013), potential physical injuries (Trondalen, 2013), criticism from others and the self, social isolation due to practicing, and having to balance work life and personal life at an early age (Sternbach, 2008). In a qualitative study that examined students' academic experiences within the context of a master's degree in solo-piano performance, interviews revealed common themes of comparison, competition, ranking/status, implied norms and expectations, feelings of inadequacy, and anxiety (Juuti & Littleton, 2010). As one might expect, these challenges often have negative impacts on students' health and well-being including burnout (Bernhard II, 2007), high incidences of depression and anxiety (Koops & Kuebel, 2019), social isolation due to practice regimes (Sternbach, 2008), heightened levels of performance anxiety (Wesner et al., 1990), and musical injuries (e.g., focal dystonia, also referred to as musician's cramp) (Jabusch & Altenmüller, 2004). Furthermore, their relationships with music may be compromised, meaning that they may be less likely to pursue an education and/or a career in music if their relationship with what was once identified as their passion is not constructive (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013).

When students choose to pursue the study of music at a university level, one might reasonably presume that music must have served a constructive role in their lives in some way, at some point in time. A survey study conducted by Simoens and Tervaniemi (2013) examined whether musician participants' (n=320) relationship with their instrument/voice would manifest relevant factors for their professional well-being and whether a feeling of *unification* with a musical instrument (including voice) is advantageous in one or more ways. Overall results suggested that musicians who felt united with their instrument reported higher levels of perceived well-being in comparison to those who did not. There were, however, differences among various aspects of well-being depending upon *how* these musician participants identified with their instrument. While this study had some limitations (e.g., only one questionnaire item to assess musician-instrument/voice relationship type and only 4 relationship type categories) and more research is needed, these results could suggest that maintaining or repairing one's relationship with their instrument could serve as a protective factor in preventing and/or navigating some of the stressors noted above.

Despite the noted challenges experienced by undergraduate music students, a paucity of relevant literature makes it difficult to determine whether these individuals may not be receiving the help and support that they need. The following section will briefly describe how music therapy may hold promise as a means of support for undergraduate music students, specifically by fostering and/or maintaining constructive relationships with music, which in turn could not only improve their experience of university music studies but also contribute to their overall health and well-being.

Relevance to Music Therapy

Music therapy is a professional discipline where certified practitioners purposefully use music experiences (active and receptive) and the relationships that develop through them to support various individuals to achieve their health and well-being potentials (Bruscia, 2014; Canadian Association of Music Therapists, 2020). Some music therapists practice from a music-centered music therapy theoretical perspective where deepening clients' constructive engagement in music experiences is considered as a therapeutic goal in and of itself, especially given the unique and multifaceted ways in which music can enrich lives (Aigen, 2005; 2014). While some music therapy research has examined how music therapy may assist music students who are experiencing performance anxiety (e.g., Kim, 2008; Martin, 2015), it was surprising that I found

no research that examined how music therapy might be utilized to help university music students, or other musicians, maintain or foster constructive relationships with music. The following section describes how my personal experiences as an undergraduate music student align with some of the challenges noted above and my subsequent motivations for conducting the present research.

Personal Relationship to the Topic

I cannot remember a period in my life when I did not spend much of my time singing and making music. I began formal music training in both piano and voice at 5 years of age. Before long, I was participating in choirs, musicals, dance classes, and enrolled in a music concentration in high school. My motivation for engaging in music throughout my childhood and adolescence was primarily intrinsic. In other words, music naturally provided me with an inherent sense of purpose, fulfillment, and safety.

It came as no surprise to anyone who knew me that I chose to pursue a 3-year college program in music performance, followed by a university bachelor's degree in jazz voice performance. During this time, the stakes, pressures, complexities, and expectations (of myself and others) changed and increased. As a result, I began to struggle with feelings of anxiety and self-esteem. Spending many hours in a practice room led to overwhelming feelings of isolation and compounded my perception that I would not be able to live up to standards (real and perceived) set by the program, the faculty, and my peers. At various times, I sought help through psychotherapy where anxiety and self-esteem related to my musical development were recurrent topics. However, in spite of their helpful intentions, I often felt that these psychotherapy professionals (who had not studied music at a university level or perhaps not at all) did not truly understand the distinct struggles involved in music practice, education, and performance; and, as such, I did not feel that I was receiving the type of help that I needed.

Upon completing my bachelor's degree, I started to question my passion for music and my future involvement with it. Like some of my university peers who had experienced similar challenges, I considered abandoning it all together. Playing music had become stressful and unpleasant. I could not understand why some of my university peers appeared to thrive and find meaning in their music and related ambitions while others, like me, did not. My relationship with music had been negatively affected by the challenges I had experienced during my post-secondary training, and I felt a deep desire to find a solution to my struggles. Despite facing

adversity in my relationship to music, I still felt a sense of devotion to my craft and being a musician was an important part of my identity that I did not want to let go of.

I discovered music therapy while in college completing my first music degree, thanks to my mother who recognized my passion for music and psychology, as well as my desire to help others. She had heard about music therapy and brought it to my awareness as a potential career path. I subsequently applied to a university where I could major in music and minor in psychology to help ensure my eligibility to apply for a graduate program in music therapy. I graduated from my bachelor's with a major in music and a minor in psychology and had all the necessary prerequisites.

During my music therapy graduate studies at Concordia university (Montreal, Canada), I first completed a 1-year (3-semester) preprofessional graduate diploma program where I acquired professional competencies through coursework and a supervised 1200-hour internship, working with various client populations. I became interested in contributing to the development and promotion of music therapy through research and decided to pursue a thesis-based Masters in music therapy at the same university, immediately after completing my graduate diploma.

Since embarking on my training and initial professional practice as a music therapist, I have worked with clients in ways that strive to build, deepen, and/or maintain constructive relationships with music which, in turn, has contributed to their well-being. I have also adopted new approaches to engaging with music in my own life—in ways that are non-judgmental, compassionate, and serve as an authentic expression of myself rather than being a demonstration of my technical ability. I feel that this new attitude has mended at least some of my relationship with music, which in turn has enhanced my well-being. I intend to continue with this personal health and well-being initiative.

Cumulatively, my experiences also led me to wonder how music therapy might have helped me and my peers if we had had access to it during our undergraduate music training and how it might serve as a viable option to support music students—to help foster or maintain their relationship to music and/or address the stressors and anxieties that often occur. I also realized that my experiences led to some assumptions on my part, which needed to be explicated and examined prior to collecting data for the study that I wanted to conduct.

Assumptions. Based on my personal experiences as an undergraduate music student and recently certified music therapist, and literature I had read to date, I held some assumptions that

must be acknowledged. I assumed that: (a) studying music at a post-secondary level (i.e., university) will impact each student's relationship with music in some way, (b) the multitude of stressors experienced in an academic music training environment can pose a risk for music students which can result in a loss or suppression of a pre-existing musical passion, (c) music therapy has the potential to reinforce, maintain, foster, and/or mend one's relationship with music, (d) music therapists and musicians share similar music learning/education experiences that could potentially allow for a stronger therapeutic alliance, (e) music therapy can be a beneficial resource for music students facing various challenges, (f) musicians may benefit from music therapy in significant ways, given that many already engage with music as a means of expression, and (g), I concurrently held the opposite assumption to the previous one—that music therapy may not be an ideal mode of support for all musicians. For some, music may trigger negative associative responses that cannot be remediated by music (e.g., high levels of anxiety). For others, it may be uncomfortable when certain musical norms or standards are challenged by some of the ways in which music is realized or applied in music therapy contexts.

Purpose Statement

As noted above, literature indicates that many undergraduate university students face challenges that may have significant impacts on their mental health and well-being. Furthermore, research indicates that undergraduate music students face unique challenges that are specific to their chosen field of study. As an undergraduate music performance student, I experienced some of these challenges, and as a new music therapist, I believe that there is potential for music therapy to help. Therefore, the purpose of this study was twofold: (a) to understand undergraduate music students' perceptions on how their university music training experiences have changed their relationships with music, and (b) to explore (in theory) how music therapy could potentially serve as a personal resource for undergraduate music students, specifically with regard to fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music.

Research Questions

The first primary research question guiding this study was: what are undergraduate music students' perceptions on how their university music training experiences have changed their relationship with music? The subsidiary questions were: (a) What university music training experiences were perceived as having a positive/helpful impact on participants' relationship with

music? and (b) What university music training experiences were perceived as having a negative/unhelpful impact on participants' relationship with music?

The second primary question was: given the above findings, how might music therapy potentially help university music students to foster and/or maintain a constructive relationship with music during their training? The subsidiary questions were: (a) Are undergraduate music students open to the idea of engaging in music therapy as a way of fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music? Why or why not? and (b) How might music therapy address specific issues raised by the participants with regard to their relationships with music?

Key Terms

The research questions contain key terms that will be defined here, in the order they appear in the primary and subsidiary research questions.

Undergraduate music students are those who are attending a *university training* program from which they will receive a bachelor's degree in music (BMus., or equivalent), if all degree requirements are successfully completed. Learning experiences within this context typically include private music lessons, ensemble classes, masterclasses, seminars, personal practice, graded recitals, evaluations, and more (Bouchrika, 2023; Red Ventures, 2021).

Within the context of the present study, an *individual's relationship with music* encompasses the different dimensions wherein one builds meaningful connections with music. According to Bruscia (2014), these dimensions include: aspirations, studies, involvement, proficiency, self-confidence, personal significance, memories, family musical background, motivators, community music participation, musical aversions, preferences, and favorite works. These dimensions will be elaborated on in more detail in Chapter 2. Relationship with one's primary instrument/voice is an additional dimension that will be considered throughout this research (not included on Bruscia's list).

Positive impacts are those perceived as good or useful (i.e., helpful or constructive: Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.), whereas *negative impacts* are those perceived as bad or harmful (i.e., unhelpful; Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.).

While *music therapy* has been previously defined above, within the context of the present study, it is more specifically defined as a reflexive process wherein a music therapist works collaboratively with undergraduate music students (as clients) using various music experiences

and the relationships formed through them as a means of fostering or maintaining a constructive relationship with music (adapted from Bruscia, 2014).

Summary of Chapters

This thesis is divided into 5 chapters. The first chapter outlined the significance and need for the present study which led to the purpose, research questions, and definitions of key terms. The second chapter reviews relevant literature that is divided into 3 main topic areas: challenges related to university music training, development of personal relationships with music, and applications of music therapy for musicians. The third chapter will describe the qualitative interview methodology employed for this study. Chapter 4 presents the results of the study based on a content analysis of participants' interviews. Finally, Chapter 5 presents limitations along with implications of the research process and results for future practice, education, advocacy, and research.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to review what is known about topics relevant to the present study. Therefore, information obtained from scholarly literature has been integrated and organized under three overarching headings: (a) challenges related to university music training, (b) development of personal relationships with music, and (c) applications of music therapy for musicians. Cumulatively, this literature review reveals gaps in knowledge that highlight the need for this study.

Challenges Related to University Music Training

Overall, literature indicates that university students experience a number of common stressors regardless of their field of study. These include:

> … living alone for the first time, long-distance relationships with significant others, learning time management and independent living skills, balancing demands of jobs and school, living up to parental expectations, peer pressure, sleep deprivation and fluctuation in sleep patterns, and concerns about gaining employment after graduation. (Wristen, 2013)

Moreover, a meta-analysis of general population birth, cross-sectional and incidence studies, revealed that 62.5% of mental health disorder onset happens before age 25 (Solmi et al., 2021). Financial difficulties, coming to terms with sexual identity, and encountering alcohol and/or drugs are additional factors that are commonly known to impact students' mental health negatively (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2004; Robotham, 2008).

Literature also indicates that university music students experience stressors specific to their domain of study, including high incidences of anxiety and depression (Botha et al., 2022; Kegelaers et al., 2021; Koops & Kuebel, 2019; Sternbach, 2008; Wristen, 2013). Music students' self-esteem and self-image can be significantly impacted during their studies, often due to the frequent critique they face and the competitive environment that is often fostered within music programs (Juuti & Littleton, 2010; Koops & Kuebel, 2019; Wristen, 2013). While some studies suggest that this competitiveness lowers self-worth and contributes to feelings of shame (Juuti & Littleton, 2010), others highlight that it can motivate students to perform better and strengthen their motivation (Miksza et al., 2019). These contrasting findings emphasize that the impact of such challenges varies based on the individual's experience, suggesting that more research is needed to understand how predispositions may heighten students' mental health risks and how

competition and feedback may affect students' relationships with music and their overall well-being.

Research also indicates that music performance anxiety (MPA) is highly prevalent in university music students. In a study that examined stage fright in orchestral musicians (n=65), 50.3% of music students enrolled in the advanced undergraduate program at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama reported experiencing performance anxiety (Steptoe & Fidler, 1987). In a subsequent study investigating MPA amongst vocal college majors from the same institution as the previous study (n=43), results indicated that 65% of the student participants reported that anxiety negatively affected their performance (Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003). In a study on MPA amongst musicians at the University of Iowa School of Music (n=302, including undergraduate students, graduate students, and university faculty), 61.2% of respondents indicated that they experienced moderate to marked levels of distress due to MPA (Wesner et al., 1990). Research also indicates that university undergraduate students majoring in music experience higher levels of MPA than university students who participate in performance ensembles at their university but are majoring in a subject other than music. In a study using the Kenny Music Performance Anxiety Inventory – revised (K-MPAI-r), findings indicated that undergraduate music-majors (n=154) reported significantly higher levels of MPA than non-music major undergraduate students (n=166) who participated in university performance ensembles, ($t(254) = 3.22$, $p < .001$; Robson & Kenny, 2017).

Research also suggests that a tendency toward perfectionism can also impact university students' sense of well-being. Perfectionism has been linked to incidences of focal dystonia (a physical disorder involving involuntary muscle spasms) (Jabusch & Altenmüller, 2004). Additionally, there are many dimensions of perfectionism that have been found to be related to higher levels of music performance anxiety, other anxieties (including social phobias), rumination, and lower motivation in students to pursue studies and/or a career in music (Botha et al, 2022; Dobos et al., 2019; Miksza et al, 2021). These correlations were further explored in a study by Dobos et al. (2019) in which music students and young professionals aged 15-35 (n=100) completed questionnaires on perfectionism, social phobia, and performance anxiety. The results revealed a strong positive link between anxiety and perfectionism, particularly in the dimensions of *Concern over Mistakes* and *Doubts about Actions*. Overall, higher perfectionism scores were positively correlated to higher social phobia scores. Interestingly, one dimension of

perfectionism (*Organization*) was negatively correlated with music performance anxiety and social phobia, though these results were not statistically significant. Although some dimensions of perfectionism have potential benefits, literature on this topic highlights how most dimensions typically have a negative impact on the well-being of music students.

Burnout is another challenge that undergraduate university music students often experience. In a study that evaluated burnout levels in university music majors (n=203), Bernhard II (2007) found high levels of emotional exhaustion and moderate levels of depersonalization among the undergraduate student participants, regardless of their academic stream (i.e., education, composition, performance, etc.). While I found no studies that examined causes of burnout among undergraduate music students, some literature offered possible explanations. Music programs are often characterized as having a particularly heavy course load. In a paper that examined the self-reported mental health states of university music students across the United States (n=252), Koops and Kuebel (2019) stated: "Students wrote about taking courses for little or no credit that nevertheless demanded many hours of rehearsal and preparation, in addition to the other courses" (p. 138). In a paper that discussed the factors contributing to stress in the lives of music students, and its impacts on well-being, the author highlighted the fact that music students are expected to practice on their own for many hours a day as a means of improving their craft. This can contribute to a sense of social isolation in these students that is not as prevalent in other fields of study (Sternbach, 2008). This sense of isolation may also lead to burnout (La Marca et al., 2025). Finally, as music students' identities are very closely linked to their vocation (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013; Evans & McPherson, 2015), finding a balance between work/school life and personal life may be more difficult for them in comparison to students in other disciplines (Sternbach, 2008). In other words, it is hard for them to separate the personal from the professional.

The literature reviewed in this section outlined various challenges that undergraduate music students experience during their studies in addition to those faced by university students at large. As these challenges could have a potential impact on undergraduate music students' relationships with music, the following section will explore literature related to this concept.

Development of Personal Relationships with Music

It is fairly safe to say that every human being who has the capacity and opportunity to respond to music, has a personal relationship with music[1]. This relationship may consist of "the many enduring ways in which a person participates in, enjoys, and values various kinds of musical experiences, both in the past and in the present" (Bruscia, 2014, p.162). Bruscia (2014) has identified 13 dimensions that cumulatively may comprise one's relationship with music: (a) aspirations, (b) studies, (c) involvement, (d) proficiency, (e) self-confidence, (f) personal significance, (g) memories, (h) family musical background, (i) motivators, (j) community music participation, (k) musical aversions, (l) preferences, and (m) favorite works. He proposes that these dimensions dynamically interact with each other to contribute to the shaping of one's evolving relationship with music. The studies presented below further elucidate and/or complement these identified dimensions and as such, speak to various ways in which personal relationships with music have been studied and/or conceptualized.

Evans and McPherson (2015) conducted a 10-year longitudinal study that followed 157 children (7-9 years of age) where they investigated factors that might serve as predictors for the development of a long-term musical identity. Results indicated that children who began their musical education at an early age, and children who attended schools that valued music participation and education were more likely to continue to engage in music activities over time. The social interactions children had with peers, family, and others, around music was another identified predictor. Moreover, this study revealed that children's long-term musical identities were influenced by the musical experiences they had prior to beginning their formal learning. Descriptions of these experiences included:

> listening to music in the home or car with one or both parents, recollections of dancing, playing games or listening to music whilst helping to prepare a meal, watching television music programs, and observing a parent who played an instrument for relaxation with the child being close by or even being invited to join in with the parent (Evans & McPherson, 2015).

As children mature and begin to make decisions about the activities they want to pursue, research indicates that motivation is an important factor in determining their long-term

[1] This statement may not apply to individuals who have musical anhedonia and/or music agnosia—neurological conditions that impact how individuals perceive and experience music (Alossa & Castelli, 2009; Dalla Bella & Peretz, 1999; Kathios et al., 2024)

relationship with music. Comeau et al. (2019) examined what drove 6–17-year-olds (n=337) to want to learn and practice an instrument, using the Motivation for Learning Music Questionnaire (MLM). Individuals' level of autonomous motivation was classified into 5 categories: amotivation, external regulation, introjection, identification/integration, and intrinsic motivation. This study concluded that intrinsically motivated children were less affected by feelings of internal and external pressure (i.e., engaging in music out of self-imposed expectations versus the perceived expectations of others), demonstrated a stronger commitment to music, and participated more in optional musical activities. The opposite was said for participants who were classified in the *amotivation* category. This suggested that motivators such as internal and external pressures are primary factors that impact motivation, and that motivation itself is a key variable in determining how individuals choose to engage in and maintain a relationship with music.

Miksza et al. (2019) conducted a survey study that examined undergraduate and graduate university music students' motivations to pursue a music career (n=460). Most music student participants at the post-secondary level reported higher levels of autonomous motivation, indicating a firm intention to pursue a career in music. This aligns with the results of the latter study (Comeau et al., 2019), which found a positive correlation between children and adolescents with high levels of autonomous motivation and long-term involvement in music education. Furthermore, Miksza et al.'s (2019) study also suggested that "students are pursuing the goal of a music career because they personally endorse the goal and that they identify a music career with their sense of self" (p.61), which also aligns with the results of the Evans and McPherson's (2015) study discussed above, where a strong sense of musical identity predicted a long-term relationship with music. However, there were some factors that negatively predicted music students' autonomous motivation but rather predicted controlled motivation, such as teacher control and perfectionistic tendencies. Student participants who had a controlled motivation were "more likely to employ maladaptive coping styles (e.g., disengagement/avoidance) and report weaker career intentions" (Miksza et al., 2019, p.52).

A study by Bonneville-Roussy et al. (2013) examined how harmonious versus obsessive passion serve as factors that impact educational and career persistence in music (n=144). Results suggested that individuals who are obsessively passionate feel obligated to participate in activities related to their passion due to internal and external pressures, even when this would

result in negative consequences, such as interpersonal conflicts and lower life satisfaction (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013). Similar to results from Miksza et al.'s (2019) study, this study revealed that students who perceived their instructors as controlling were more likely to develop obsessive (rather than harmonious) passion. On the other hand, participants who were harmoniously passionate engaged with their passion for the pure enjoyment of it. Furthermore, harmonious passion was linked to greater career persistence and overall well-being (Bonneville-Roussy et al., 2013).

Juuti and Littleton (2010) conducted a study that examined solo-piano master's students' (n=10) perceptions of their academic culture and its impacts on their musical identity. Their analysis revealed that these students' musical identity and well-being, including aspects of self-esteem and perceived proficiency, were negatively affected by a sense of competitiveness, abiding by the practice norms of the academy, and expectations of academic and career outcomes (Juuti & Littleton, 2010). Many participants in this study compared themselves to their peers, which lead to self-critical and self-deprecating narratives, posing a risk to their relationship to music.

Lastly, literature also indicates that musicians have specific and/or complex relationships with music, which can include a strong relationship with or identification with one or more instruments (including their voice, often referred to as their primary instrument)[2]. A study with 16–64-year-old musicians (n=320; 116 music students and 204 professionals) examined the musician-instrument relationship and its links to well-being. Participants were classified into one of four musician-instrument relationship categories: *person*, *hiding*, *obstacle*, and *united*[3]. After evaluating various dimensions of well-being among this sample (i.e., sleep quality, critical life events, general health, social phobia, confidence, performance anxiety, stress, etc.), the results revealed that the participants in the group that were classified as being *united* with their instrument/voice had the most satisfactory reports of well-being. On the other hand, musicians in the *obstacle* (2.2% of respondents) and the *hiding* (10.9% of respondents) group exhibited the highest levels of music performance anxiety. Those in the *obstacle* group had the lowest

[2] Many musicians play multiple instruments, but most have a primary instrument, being the one they are most knowledgeable about, through which their musical perception is shaped, and the one to which they have dedicated the most time and effort to learning.

[3] Identification of musician-instrument relationships were defined as follows: united: "so united with my instrument/voice that there is no difference between us"; person: "that it's really me as a person in front of the audience rather than my instrument/voice"; hiding: "protected/hiding behind my instrument"; and obstacle: "that my instrument is an obstacle to overcome between me and the audience" (Simoens & Tervaniemi, 2013, p.174).

performance confidence, avoided performances the most, experienced the greatest mental distress in comparison to the other groups, and reported not enjoying playing as much as they used to (Simoens & Tervaniemi, 2013). This study revealed that the strength of the musician-instrument relationship was positively correlated to the musician participants' mental health and that lower levels of well-being were correlated with a negative musician-instrument relationship.

Overall, these studies indicate that there are many factors that can influence one's relationship with music over time. The following section will discuss how music therapy has been used to support musicians, which has relevance for the present study given its focus on exploring the potentials of music therapy for undergraduate music students.

Applications of Music Therapy for Musicians

While no formal musical knowledge or training is required for one to potentially benefit from music therapy intervention (The Quebec Association for Music Therapy, n.d.), some scholarly literature outlines how music therapy might be helpful for musicians. Music therapy practices typically include four methods of musical intervention: (a) receptive, (b) improvisation, (c) composition, and (d) re-creative (Bruscia, 2014). All of these methods have the potential to address various therapeutic goal areas with musicians, including, but not limited to, increasing a sense of self-actualization, self-efficacy, expressive freedom and communication, and supporting physical injuries and musical flow (Trondalen, 2013).

Applications of music therapy for musicians have been explored in various publications. A seminal work in this area is a book entitled *Music at the Edge,* written by music therapist scholar Colin Lee (1996; 2016). In this extensive music-centered music therapy case study, Lee described the music therapy process of a client living with AIDS who was also a musician. Lee highlighted that while his own musical abilities were *tested* by this client, this also may have strengthened the therapeutic alliance. He also noted that this client demonstrated a sophisticated understanding of the dichotomy between musical growth and therapeutic outcome, reflected in both his verbal expressions and music improvisations. This case study exemplifies the complex interplay that can exist between a musician's creative abilities and the therapeutic process.

Another case study on the use of music therapy with a musician was published by Trondalen (2010). Here she presents an overview of 17 Guided Imagery and Music (GIM) sessions conducted with Lars, a musician client who referred himself to GIM out of curiosity. Trondalen (2010) describes Session #14 in detail, as it was a particularly significant part of this

client's therapy process. In this session, Lars' primary instrument (the flute) appeared to play a key role in his imagery. Trondalen (2010) states:

> ... one possible interpretation of the flute may be tied to the function of the instrument itself. The role of the flute is generally that of playing with others and being part of a greater whole. It is also a frequently used solo instrument and may thereby function as a social symbol. To Lars the instrument may hold an implicit wish to connect and work with others, something he often finds challenging and difficult" ("The Flute as a Symbolic Instrument" section).

This interpretation demonstrates potential for how receptive music experiences, such as GIM, may incorporate musicians' relationships with music and/or with specific instruments into therapy processes in ways that address their personal needs.

Ahonen and Lee (2011) conducted a study wherein clinical improvisation and verbal discussion were used in four music therapy sessions to explore inter-musical and inter-personal dynamics amongst members of a professional string quartet. An analysis of session transcripts revealed themes related to potential burnout and conflicts between members, which were subsequently reflected upon with the musician clients. Ahonen and Lee (2011) concluded that "transferring these concepts discussed outside the music therapy situation enabled them to continue their work as professional musicians as well as explore their individual and collective responses to music" (p. 535).

Seabrook (2018) explored and analyzed the use of clinical improvisation with artists from various disciplines where 13 of the 18 participants were classical musicians. Through an analysis of interview transcripts, overlapping themes emerged across participants, some of which related exclusively to the experiences of the musicians in the sample. They expressed feeling an increase in their theoretical and performance skills as well as a feeling of "being able to make their own music, as opposed to interpreting a composition; making music without the baggage of their primary instrument; playing in novel ways; and re-connecting with the source of music" (Seabrook, 2018, p. 202). However, not all of their experiences were positive. They also reported that clinical improvisation led to feelings of anxiety and frustration, as well as conflicts with their musical identity, stemming from a perception that their music was not aesthetically pleasing or that their performance was inadequate.

These perspectives align with Gross and Musgrave's (2020) book entitled *Can Music Make You Sick?* which discusses various aspects of musicians' lives that are negatively affected

by their devotion to their art. The authors describe the coexistence of oneself (the musician) and their relationship with music as "loving something so much which at times doesn't love you, and which at times gives you so much love and joy and fulfillment but which you sometimes hate" (Gross & Musgrave, 2020, p. 112). This dual perspective needs to be considered by music therapists who are working with musicians, and they need to consider the possibility that music therapy (or certain music therapy approaches or methods) may be contraindicated for some musicians when music itself is the cause of harm. Alternatively, Trondalen (2013) suggests that "the problem is also the solution" (p. 842), indicating that music therapy may be an effective therapeutic approach for musicians who are experiencing challenges in their relationships with music. Cumulatively, the studies discussed in this section thus far illustrate how music therapy has potential to support musicians with certain challenges, however it is also important to explore how music therapy can be used to specifically address the challenges faced specifically by university music students.

A few studies have examined applications of music therapy for university music students. Given the prevalence of music performance anxiety among music students (Kokotsaki & Davidson, 2003; Kenny, 2011; Steptoe & Fidler, 1987; Wesner et al., 1990), Kim (2008) examined the use of music therapy to treat performance anxiety among college piano students. She compared the effectiveness of two treatment types: a music listening group (n=15) vs. a music improvisation group (n=15). The participants took part in 6 weekly music therapy sessions in correspondence with their respective intervention approach. Data was collected using various measurement scales before and after treatment. Results showed that there was no significant difference between treatment groups, but that both intervention approaches (receptive and improvisational) were effective in decreasing MPA for these participants (Kim, 2008).

Martin (2015) also examined the use of receptive music therapy interventions to treat music performance anxiety. Music student participants (n=5) took part in 6 sessions of a modified version of the Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music (GIM), called Guided Music Imaging (GMI). In GIM, the therapist and client have a discussion at the beginning of the session to discuss goals. The client is then induced into an altered state of relaxation and is guided through a 30-45-minute journey of music listening of which the musical piece is strategically chosen from a pre-selected repertoire (Grocke, 2019; Martin, 2015). The client is encouraged to engage in spontaneous imaging inspired from their subconscious. After the music

listening experience, the client often debriefs through writing or drawing a mandala (Grocke. 2019). In Martin's study, each session had a pre-determined theme related to MPA and the music-listening included a 10-minute pre-selected musical excerpt (Martin, 2015). Session transcripts, session notes and a post-test interview served as research data. The results presented were limited to the case study of only one of the five participants initially examined. The chosen case study demonstrated that GMI was a helpful resource in helping the participant cope with his MPA. Examples of these benefits included the following: he enjoyed performing more than before, he was more focused during his musical practice, and he had gained more self-awareness.

Lastly, Matney (2017) explored the impact of receptive music therapy methods on anxiety in university music students according to the instrumentation of a musical excerpt. The musical selection was Bach Air from Orchestra Suite No. 3 in D Major, BWV 1068 and participants were assigned to one of three listening groups: musical excerpt arranged for (a) strings (n=17), (b) piano (n=19), and (c) marimba (n=18). Everyone filled out a pre-test and post-test questionnaire to rate their anxiety. The findings indicated that, regardless of the music's instrumentation, certain characteristics were essential for promoting relaxation. These included a tempo between 57-64 bpm, legato expression, appropriate volume levels, smooth transitions, absence of sharp timbres, and consonant melodies and harmonies (Matney, 2017).

As can be seen in this chapter, music therapy appears to hold potential for application with university music students, and specifically with regard to the relationships that they have with music. However, more research is needed, and the present study sought to contribute to this gap in knowledge. The following chapter presents details regarding the methodology employed for the present study.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Design

This qualitative interview study utilized content analysis techniques where data derived from interviews was condensed and organized into meaningful categories and/or concepts (Ghetti & Keith, 2016). The goal was not to identify *cause-and-effect* relationships between or among predetermined variables but rather to allow contextually relevant variables (or *realities*) to *emerge* that would help to answer broad research questions with the hope of providing new perspectives that could be further explored in subsequent research (Baker & Young, 2016; Mayring, 2022). Cross-case analysis techniques were also used to contrast and compare the experiences and perspectives of each participant (Borman et al., 2006; Khan & VanWynsberghe, 2008; Miles & Huberman, 1994). The final subsidiary research question (see Chapter 1) is addressed in Chapter 5 because it strives to make links between what emerged from the interviews and how it might be addressed in music therapy practice with undergraduate music students.

Delimitations

In order to focus on the topic of study and keep it within a Master thesis timeline some delimitations were imposed. Three research participants participated in one individual online interview which lasted no more than 60 minutes.

Participants

This research was approved by the Concordia Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) prior to initiating any recruitment or data collection procedures (see Appendix A). Three undergraduate music student participants were recruited by using purposeful convenience (i.e., easily accessible) and snowball (i.e., “selection of those recommended by others”) sampling procedures (Curtis, 2016, "Determining the Sample and Sampling" section). A recruitment message (see Appendix B) was sent via e-mail to 34 undergraduate music schools in Canada. These email addresses were obtained via the schools’ public websites. Each university was invited to share this information with faculty and students. There were five criteria for inclusion: (a) participants must be over 18 years of age, (b) participants were not required to have any prior experience or knowledge about music therapy, (c) at the time of the interview, the participant had to be a full-time student enrolled in a Bachelor of Music program (BMus. or equivalent, including streams such as general, performance, education, composition, or other), (d) students

must be in the final year of their first bachelor's degree. The latter criterion was based on evidence indicating that there are important developmental changes and transitions that come with entering post-secondary education for the first time (Sternbach, 2008; Wristen, 2013), and that there are specific stressors that become especially salient in one's final year of undergraduate studies (Amodeo et al., 2017; Rickinson, 1998). Finally, (e) participants were required to be fluent in either French or English.

Participants in this study included the first three respondents who met the criteria for inclusion, provided informed consent, participated in the interview process, and did not withdraw their consent within the 2-week designated period. Potential participants were e-mailed a consent form in their preferred language (see Appendix C). Those who decided to participate returned the consent form via e-mail using a scanned, photographed, or electronic signature. Participants received no remuneration.

Materials

Materials for this study included: (a) a laptop with the video conferencing application, Zoom, to hold and record the interviews, as well as with Microsoft Word for note taking, recruitment materials, the questionnaire, and the interview transcriptions, (b) an iPad used as a secondary back-up recording device for the interviews, and (c) an external hard drive where all digital data was backed up. All devices used were passcode-protected. The hard drive and any physical data were stored in a locked cabinet in the researcher's home. All documents relating to this study were locally stored, not in any form of cloud storage.

Data Collection Procedures

Once informed consent was obtained, a mutually convenient time was arranged with each participant for an online interview. An interview guide (see Appendix D) and an information sheet about how music therapy was being defined within the context of this study (see Appendix E) were sent to each participant one week (5 business days) prior to each scheduled interview to give them a chance to reflect upon the research topic and their answers. Interviews followed a semi-structured format. Additional supportive questions such as "Can you say more about that?" or "What was that like for you?" were used to gather information and/or focus the participant on the topic at hand as the interview unfolded. Participants could also ask any questions that arose for them during the interviews.

Data Analysis Procedures

Each interview was transcribed, verbatim, within 5-10 business days of the interview date and sent back to the participant. Participants were then given two weeks (10 business days) to make any desired adjustments to the transcript. One participant requested that some personally sensitive information be removed. The other two participants did not respond, indicating that they required no revisions (as outlined in the Information & Consent form; see Appendix C).

I began by reading each transcript through as a whole, keeping the research questions in mind, highlighting salient passages. I then created a narrative summary of each participant's interview, aiming to relay essential elements of each individual's experience of their undergraduate music training and how it impacted their relationship with music. Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity. Next, I conducted a cross-case analysis of the narrative summaries where three of the four subsidiary questions (contained in the two primary questions) served as predetermined categories: (a) university music training experiences perceived as having a positive/helpful impact on participants' relationship with music, (b) university music training experiences perceived as having a negative/unhelpful impact on participants' relationship with music, and (c) participants perspectives on engaging in music therapy as a way of fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music. A content analysis process revealed common themes that emerged within each of these pre-determined categories. Contrasts among the data were also identified. Quotes were integrated into the themes as a means of enhancing the authenticity and credibility of the findings. The final subsidiary question was addressed in Chapter 5 as it identifies implications of the results for music therapy practice, based on how the preceding research questions were answered.

Chapter 4. Results

The present study sought to answer two primary research questions. The first question was: What are undergraduate music students' perceptions on how their university music training experiences have changed their relationship with music? The subsidiary questions for this first question were: (a) What university music training experiences were perceived as having a positive/helpful impact on participants' relationship with music? and (b) What university music training experiences were perceived as having a negative/unhelpful impact on participants' relationship with music?

The second primary research question was: In light of the above findings, how might music therapy potentially help university music students to foster and/or maintain a constructive relationship with music during their training? The subsidiary questions were: (a) Are undergraduate music students open to the idea of engaging in music therapy as a way of fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music? Why or why not? and (b) How might music therapy address specific issues raised by the participants with regard to their relationships with music?

A narrative summary of each participant's interview is presented below. This is followed by a cross-case analysis as described in Chapter 3.

Individual Narrative Summaries

Participant 1: Charlotte

At the time of the interview, Charlotte was a music major in an education concentration stream. Prior to university, she had been homeschooled along with her two brothers. Her primary instrument was classical piano, but she also took cello lessons and participated in choirs during adolescence. She recalled pleasant memories of her mother introducing basic piano skills to her as a child, and at age 7 she began formal lessons. Charlotte started teaching music early on, at age 15. She quickly realized that she enjoyed helping her students progress and has continued teaching ever since. In fact, her teaching experience was the primary reason for pursuing bachelor studies in music education.

When describing her personal relationship with music, Charlotte identified an important shift that took place when she decided to pursue a university degree in music. She indicated that "before that point, it was … just for fun" and that up to that point, she felt that she did not really

have a musical identity. However, this changed as the following quote indicates that now "[I] think[s] of myself as a musician, and I think of music as a medium … to help people."

When discussing the course of her relationship with the instruments she plays (identified above), Charlotte noted her tendency to think of music more melodically, rather than harmonically. She described harmony as an "intellectual" music skill, which occasionally intimidated her. She indicated that she had experienced more performance anxiety at the piano than she had when playing the cello or when singing. She further elaborated on this point by describing that the way in which a pianist sits at the instrument seems very "formal" whereas a cello feels more like "you're giving it a hug while you play it." She also pointed out that the piano can be a socially isolating instrument since there is typically only one within a musical ensemble, which may put an added sense of pressure on the performer. In contrast, there are usually multiple cellos playing in an ensemble or multiple voices singing in a choir. However, Charlotte indicated that the amount of work she had put into playing piano during her degree had enhanced her skills to communicate musically via this instrument and that this had lessened her performance anxiety. Overall, Charlotte maintained that pursuing a degree in music had increased her sense of confidence in the ways she engages with music, regardless of the instrument, and she had come to believe that making mistakes was an important part of her learning.

However, Charlotte also shared an experience that had an unhelpful impact on her relationship with music. At a particular point in her university training, she did not feel supported by her piano instructor, stating that she felt she could not be herself in the lessons given that the teacher would present as "quite emotionally distant," "very serious" and "had a very specific mindset about things… that was not communicated very clearly". She emphasized the importance of having a good relationship with one's primary instrument teacher, since private lessons are the core of every music student's educational experience. Charlotte had considered dropping out of the program but when she took her complaint to the administration, she was assigned a new instructor with whom she had a more positive experience.

Charlotte also indicated feeling that her program did not prepare students well for what comes after completing a music degree, with herself, and some of her peers, experiencing feelings of disorientation by the end of their degree. Some even considered "turning the page on music." Nonetheless, she did not let this dissuade her from completing her degree and maintaining her relationship with music. She was driven by her own musical goals, was

interested in pursuing a master's, and at the time of this interview was considering music therapy as a potential educational/career pursuit.

Finally, Charlotte indicated that music therapy might have served as a helpful mode of support during her degree. She felt it may have the potential to encourage musicians to be more vulnerable when engaging in music making with their instrument and that this would allow for a deeper understanding of one's own emotions. She speculated that music therapy might be beneficial for the younger undergraduate music students, stating that she knows a lot more about herself now (at age 24) than she did at 18 (the age at which many young adults begin their university degree). She believed that music therapy could offer a space for self-discovery during this period in young adults' lives and that this in turn could even enrich their musicianship. She also believed that music therapy could serve to benefit students' mental health, and especially those who may be prone to experiencing burnout as they strive toward the end of their degree. As a music education major, Charlotte thought that learning about music therapy from a client perspective could, in turn, contribute to becoming a better educator. Lastly, she shared that she felt that music students might have a certain ease in engaging in music therapy given that there is already a certain level of comfort in regard to using instruments as a means of expression.

Participant 2: Max

Max was a music major with a specialization in jazz studies. Her primary instrument was jazz drums. Max had originally started learning guitar, and then bass, but became a percussionist in high school band class. She eventually realized that she was naturally better at reading percussion sheet music as compared to bass and this reinforced her desire to embrace drums as her primary instrument.

She had been involved in the arts from a young age but developed a specific interest in pursuing music after participating in a specialized music summer day camp as a teenager. She was inspired by the camp counsellors who were all enrolled as music students in local colleges and universities.

Just before graduating high school, Max decided to audition for a music program at a local college[4], telling herself that if she didn't get in, she would abandon music as a vocation. She was pleased by her acceptance into the program and felt confident about pursuing post-secondary

[4] In reference to a 2-year pre-university program of which one acquires a diploma of college studies within a specific program.

studies in music. However, this sense of confidence quickly dissipated upon entering the program. When comparing herself to her peers, she felt that she did not deserve to be in the program. It seemed that the other students already had a better understanding of the expectations and requirements of being a music student (i.e., practice regimes, ear training skills, theory knowledge, etc.). Overall, she described her college experience as being competitive. Furthermore, she believed that certain factors had hindered the development of a supportive social environment (e.g., COVID-19 and language barriers between her and her peers). She also emphasized that due to her heavy course load, music began to feel more like a "chore."

After completing her college program, Max began to doubt her relationship with music. She expressed uncertainty about continuing her jazz music studies at a university level, emphasizing the dichotomy that "it's such a beautiful music and it's so based on … community and … love and yet it's … run by competition and … vibing, and … just bad stuff." Nonetheless, she applied to two university music programs (in the city where she lived) and upon receiving acceptance into one of them, decided to pursue a bachelor's in jazz drums.

Max felt lucky that her university experience was very different and positive as compared to her college experience, stating that: "I found people that really … uplifted me." These included peers, as well as some of her teachers, whose support, feedback, and praise contributed to an increase in Max's sense of self-confidence in her own musical competencies. She emphasized that this was due in great part to forming a strong bond with her primary instrument teacher who achieved a good balance between friendliness and pushing her to reach her potential.

By the end of her degree, Max felt she had developed a stronger sense of musical maturity and confidence, sharing that she did not care about others' opinions as much as she used to and that she had more trust in her abilities to critique herself constructively. She believed she was developing a better understanding of her musical identity and a shift in musical priorities. For example, she mentioned that she used to focus more on practicing and on being a performer but is rather now hoping to research and write about music, (perhaps about her place in jazz as a woman). Max characterized this shift in interest as "taking a step back" from music in a way she deemed to be healthy. She also mentioned an important shift in her relationship with her primary instrument, expressing that she used to feel "alienated" by the drums, but now, "my hands end and then it [the drums] begins."

In her final year of her bachelor's degree, Max was nominated, along with some close friends in the program, to prepare a recital for a scholarship competition and potentially have the opportunity to play at a prestigious jazz festival. Max perceived this opportunity as having a positive impact on her relationship with music and with her instrument. As a drummer, she had not had many opportunities to direct her own project or lead a band, and she felt that this opportunity allowed her to discover new skills that she did not even know she had.

It is also important to note, however, that Max also identified factors that had some negative impacts on her experience as an undergraduate music student. These included unprofessional behaviors among teachers such as: bad mouthing another student, making inappropriate statements (e.g., misogynistic comments), giving criticism that was not constructive, and creating a sense of pressure for students to keep the genre of jazz relevant in society. She also noted that she and many of her peers experienced a general sense of burnout at the end of each semester or academic year which caused them to disengage from music. Although she had mentioned that taking a step back from music can be a positive thing, she also indicated that this can sometimes end up damaging individuals' relationships with their instrument, leading them to drop out of their music program, perhaps even ending all of their musical endeavors. While Max expressed feelings of uncertainty about her own musical future, she expressed feeling confident that music would always be present and meaningful in her life.

When asked about music therapy, Max thought that it has the potential to be a beneficial resource for music students, emphasizing that, "I kind of feel like they [music students] already do [music therapy] without realizing it." She stated that music therapy "could be really nice to reconnect someone to their instrument," relating this to how she had often used the drums as a way of processing feelings of anger. However, Max also suspected that some music students might struggle in music therapy by being exposed to the thing that was causing them stress (i.e., music), although this in some ways would justify the need for music therapy. Max thought that a music student client could participate in music therapy on an instrument other than their primary instrument (e.g., a non-drummer using the drums to process anger; she thought she might try piano). Max stated that she would have been open to trying music therapy had the option been offered to her as an undergraduate music student.

Participant 3: Noah

At the time of the interview, Noah was in the process of completing a double major in science and music. His primary instrument was the drums with a concentration in jazz. He had decided to add a music major to his science degree because he felt that university offered networking opportunities to connect with other musicians and that he would improve his craft at a faster rate than if he had tried to do so on his own. Noah indicated that he always had an innate attraction to the drums, stating: "I was probably five or six and trying to … fashion a drum set out of like, household items and stuff, … play along with … whatever records they [his parents] were listening to."

When describing his relationship with music prior to the start of his music major, Noah said that it "was very much driven by curiosity", and that this had remained stable throughout his studies. With respect to his relationship with his instrument, he shared that he used to view the drums as being the epicentre of all music, meaning that he connected to the music he was engaging with solely from the drummer's perspective. However, he described a shift in his perspective upon entering post-secondary music education: "I would say that drums, to me, are an instrument that should serve music, but they don't necessarily define music".

Noah identified other important shifts that took place in regard to his relationship with music throughout his degree but did not indicate specific times or contexts. Notably, he now approaches music by considering the dichotomous relationship between playing music for his own pleasure and playing music for the pleasure of the listener. He noticed that peers who made "sacrifices" by playing music they were less passionate about to maximize job opportunities were finding music less meaningful or fulfilling. He came to realize that considering the listener can often allow for the music to better reach and connect with the audience members, creating a mutually beneficial experience between both parties. Lastly, prior to starting music school, Noah's musical identity used to be based on being a performer. However, throughout his degree, new musical interests emerged, such as theory and composition, and these have become defining factors of how he identifies as a musician now. As his relationship with music continues to evolve, Noah's stated goal is to have his music be an authentic representation of who he is as a person.

Noah described one performance experience that positively impacted his relationship with music, contributing to an increased sense of self-confidence. One semester, the large ensemble

class that Noah was a part of was scheduled to perform at an annual jazz festival. In his eyes, he was being given the opportunity "to perform just as … any, quote-unquote real artist… would"; something he had less experience doing given his heavy, double-major, course load. At first, the prospect of this performance seemed intimidating as the ensemble was only playing pre-existing arrangements of well-known jazz standards. "I thought that I was kind of doing a second-rate type rendition … of the piece". However, upon listening back to his performance within the ensemble, he was pleased with his performance and realized how his university musical training journey was unique to him, which had allowed him to develop his own sound. He specified that this was a "formative experience" and that, should a similar opportunity arise now, he would not find it as daunting.

Something else that Noah felt contributed positively to his relationship with music was the fact that he noted a strong sense of support amongst his peers, which created a "mutually constructive" environment that encouraged each student's progress, including his own. This was supported by a weekly "forum" event that his music department organized, where music students were invited to discuss and play music with an open-minded approach. Noah appreciated that his school offered opportunities like these for their students to participate in low-stake music activities, as it offsets the high stakes imposed within the academic environment.

There were a couple of factors that Noah identified as having a negative impact on his relationship with music during his university studies. Firstly, Noah described a sense of apprehension when considering his future in music, finding it challenging to find a balance between pursuing music for his own benefit and making the right career choices in order to sustain himself. Secondly, he described a recurring feeling of comparing himself to his peers in terms of acquired skills, elaborating that this sentiment was likely caused by the fact that he had less time than his peers to dedicate to his craft since he had two majors to focus on simultaneously. That being said, he felt that his approach to learning had contributed to an individuality in the way he expresses himself musically.

Noah was interested in the use of music therapy for music students, given his understanding that the therapeutic space is non-judgemental and that there are no expectations on the objective quality of the music being made thus removing a common source of pressure often found amongst musicians. He felt that for himself, he might prefer participating in individual music therapy sessions, perhaps using instruments he was less familiar with. His rationale for this

perspective was related to the stress that can occasionally come about when playing in ensembles and the historical baggage one often carries with their primary instrument.

Cross-Case Analysis

Table 1 provides an overview of the themes that emerged within the predetermined categories that were guided by the first three subsidiary research questions (as described in Chapter 3). There are descriptions of each theme (organized within the three categories) wherein individuals' perspectives and experiences are compared and contrasted.

Table 1

Categories and Themes

Category	Theme
1. University experiences that positively impacted students' relationships with music.	a: Social network b: Defining a musical identity c: Academic opportunities
2. University experiences that negatively impacted students' relationships with music.	a: Comparing oneself to others b: Student-teacher relationship issues c: Burnout
3. Students' perspectives on engaging in music therapy to foster/maintain a constructive relationship with music	a: Perceived potential benefits b: Session format (group vs. individual sessions & instrument choice)

Category 1: University Experiences that Positively Impacted Students' Relationships with Music

Theme 1a: Social network

All three participants in this study recognized the importance of finding and/or building a strong social network within which they felt accepted, motivated, and encouraged in their musical development. This included creating meaningful bonds amongst peers, as well as making professional connections. As emphasized by Max: "that's like the main part of jazz school… it's making connections and … forming friends."

As described in Max's narrative summary, the friendships she built in her university training far surpassed those she made in college, where she struggled to make meaningful connections. She described an increased sense of pride and confidence after her scholarship nomination performance, thanks in part to her peers and professors who openly acknowledged her progress. Noah also characterized his peer relationships as being "mutually constructive" and speculated that this sense of support between students might be due to the fact that music programs tend to have smaller cohorts as compared to other university programs.

Charlotte's experience contrasted slightly with those of Max and Noah's. Given that she was a few years older than others in her cohort, she explained that she did not always feel that she related to her younger peers who were perhaps in a different stage of their lives. Therefore, Charlotte's university social network was more reliant on making professional connections with her professors. She stated: "I feel the age gap a little bit. … I try to ignore it … but I also acknowledge like a lot of my time here [at the university] is about teaching and it's about the connections that I make, … and I try to have a really well-balanced life between work and my social life and school." Nonetheless, she mentioned having built a strong connection with her roommate who was a classical pianist in the same program as her.

Theme 1b: Defining a Musical Identity

It appeared that by the end of their degrees, Charlotte, Noah, and Max's university training experiences had contributed to the constructive development of various aspects of their musical identities. For these participants, defining their musical identity was connected to how they viewed their relationship with their primary instrument, their musical purpose, future musical goals, and what it meant to be a "musician".

For Charlotte, being "a good musician [was] not necessarily … being the virtuoso perfect … example of what it's supposed to be. It's more about your relationship … with music and what you can get out of it or what you can communicate." Charlotte described how her university training had helped her strengthen the skills she needed to better express herself through music and magnified her desire to reach the people with whom she was sharing the musical space. This also contributed to her purpose as a musician. She said, "in terms of how I think about music now, … I think about music as a medium … to help people." Charlotte expressed an interest in learning more about the therapeutic aspects of her relationship with music and was already considering pursuing music therapy studies. She expressed that becoming a music therapist

would fulfill her desire to use her relationship with music as a means to benefit others, which would provide her with a sense of fulfillment. Charlotte also felt that the skills she had acquired as a music educator would be complementary to her potential pursuit as a music therapist.

There were many instances throughout Max's interview where she expressed that she struggled to understand "how to be a jazz musician" and what improvements were required of her upon entering post-secondary music studies. Over time, she developed a sense of confidence and musical maturity that contributed to a clearer definition of her musical identity. Most significantly, Max identified an important positive shift in her relationship with her primary instrument. She shared how she used to view her instrument as very unforgiving, saying that:

> …the thing about drums is that you can't hide. … you can physically hide behind it. … But … sometimes can't. … It is so loud, and it is so present that if you're not … confident, you can hear it immediately. … And for a long time, it sounded like that. Like I sounded very unconfident. And there have been times … where I'm … really practicing a lot, where I feel … very alienated by it. 'Cause it's like a big hunk of … metal and wood. … I used to sit down at a drum kit and … not know how to adjust it for me … now I sit down and I'm like, … this is not right. And then, … I spend five minutes and I just make it right.

Over time, Max reached a point where she felt completely united with her instrument on a physical level ("my hands end and then it [the drums] begins"). In terms of Max's musical purpose and goals, she expressed having spent a lot of time reflecting on her place as a woman in the jazz music community and hopes to write about her learnings. What she discovers in this process may also contribute to how she chooses to engage with music in the future.

At the time of Noah's interview, he described his musical identity as being largely characterized by how his own musical baggage defined his playing and differentiated him from his peers. "It's sort of part of my musical identity … to do things my own way." … "Why am I playing music? Why am I creating music? … that's the question that guides musical identity for me." "I want … my place within music to reflect who I am as a person." He indicated that his goal was to eventually have his personal identity and his musical identity merge into one. Noah viewed one's relationship with music as being cyclical and continuously evolving.

Theme 1c: Academic Opportunities

It appeared that musical opportunities offered within the academic environment played a big role in strengthening the participants' relationships with music. Max and Noah both recalled

specific performance-based opportunities that they characterized as being formative and contributing to increased self-esteem. Both opportunities also had a targeted purpose (a scholarship for Max and an ensemble performance at a renown jazz festival for Noah). However, both participants experienced a sense of self-doubt when first presented with this opportunity.

Noah said:

> …it seemed like a huge hurdle to go over when I first heard that we were gonna do this gig [performing at the jazz festival]. … I wasn't sure if, if I was made for that, … I wasn't sure if I could do something like that. I don't generally play big gigs. … I don't really gig a lot at all. … a lot of the struggle that I had been facing before doing the show was feeling like certain music was kind of off limits to me because I just, I couldn't serve it the way that the drummer on the recording could do it.

And after listening to recordings of his show…

> I realized that I was not doing a second-rate rendition. I was doing something that only I could do that still worked. It didn't sound exactly like the recording, but of course, I've had a different musical experience from whoever was playing on that record. So, I've sort of been able to come to terms more with just playing how I play and how that can be valuable as well.

Having this opportunity to perform at the jazz festival was the catalyst that enabled a positive shift in Noah's relationship with music.

Max had the opportunity within her university program to be a band leader for the first time. She stated: "I wouldn't have probably been able to do this without … [name of school] nominating me for the award." She spoke about the abundance of support she received from fellow students and professors that prompted her musical progression while in school and in preparation for the competition. Although it was reinforcing to hear positive feedback from peers, she also expressed that she had felt proud of herself regardless of others' feedback. "It just felt like a very clear representation of how far I've come as a drummer."

Throughout her interview, Charlotte did not specify any particular academic opportunity that impacted her relationship with music positively but mentioned that her overall experience as a university music student allowed her to develop a heightened sense of confidence in her musical skills. The new skills she had acquired over the course of her academic training (i.e., ear training, improvising, singing, performing and more) contributed to a deeper sense of trust in her

abilities to express herself musically which in turn resulted in significantly lowered levels of performance anxiety. This applied not only to her piano playing, but to her singing as well.

Category 2: University Experiences that Negatively Impacted Students' Relationships with Music.

Theme 2a: Comparing Oneself to Others

Throughout the interviews, each participant brought up instances where they had questioned their legitimacy as striving musicians by comparing themselves to others.

For Charlotte, this came about when discussing her relationship with her primary instrument, the piano. She compared how she approached her instrument to how other piano students in her program approached it. She described the piano as a more "intellectual" instrument in comparison to singing or other instruments (i.e., the cello), which she characterized as being more tactile or "kinesthetic." When comparing herself with her peers, she shared:

> I think more melodically than harmonically, and the piano is the supporting harmonic instrument. … So I … started digging into theory and stuff, but I always found that aspect kind of difficult about it, just in terms of, a lot of my friends that play piano think about it, you know, all these cool harmonic structures and everything. And I'm just like, 'look at this pretty melody.'

Charlotte also compared herself (as a pianist) to her peers, who were cellists. She stated that she wished she had pursued cello (her secondary instrument) instead of piano (her primary instrument). She explained: "I think that cello is a bit more social of an instrument, … I find piano can be a bit isolating sometimes."

Max was also impacted negatively by comparing herself to her peers during her college and university music studies. Upon entering college, she said:

> I … met … all of the people that were in my cohort and … they had all been … practicing for years and they have … strict practicing regiments and everything. And I just, I didn't know how to practice. I didn't know any of that stuff. I kind of was just … coasting. And I met them, and I was like, 'Okay, we are at very different levels here. What am I doing here?' I was confident in the fact that … I wanted to be there, but I was very not confident in the fact that I deserved to be there.

Max described a similar feeling when applying to universities, explaining that she did not feel she deserved to attend a highly selective university with a better reputation, and that should

she be accepted, there would be suspicion that her acceptance was linked to diversity (being that she identified as a woman in jazz), rather than because of her musicianship. Max expressed a feeling of relief and "safety" when she got accepted to a university that she claimed accepted students of wide-ranging proficiency levels. Then, during her years at this university, she stated that she found herself relying too much on others' opinions to gain a sense of validation. This started to pose an issue for Max, especially as she started to realize that everyone (professors and peers alike) had conflicting opinions, making it even harder for her to form her own opinions about musicianship and musical taste. Although this had negative impacts on her relationship with music during her degree, she expressed that she no longer looked to others for affirmation of her musical identity, due in part to the positive experiences described in the previous category.

Lastly, Noah claimed that his pursuit of a double major in music and science gave him a different perspective on music school than that of his peers who only pursued a music major. He often felt that he was not as immersed in developing his craft as his peers, which was justified by the time constraints related to completing two bachelor's degrees simultaneously. He also noticed that due to differences in personal taste and in musical interest, he was not always learning/working on the same skills as the other students in his program. Noah shared that comparing himself to his peers in music occasionally led to feelings of "inadequacy."

Theme 2b: Student-teacher relationship issues

Two participants indicated that student-teacher relationship issues negatively impacted their relationships with music.

Charlotte recounted an experience with a primary instrument professor whose personality and teaching approach felt incompatible with what she needed. She felt that she could not fully be herself in her lessons.

> …he was very kind, but he was very, very serious about it [the music lesson] and had a very specific mindset about things and not one that was communicated very clearly to me. … it was quite exhausting for me. I would often … spend my lesson time trying not to cry and then just crying afterwards and being like, I don't understand what's being asked of me. I don't feel supported, and this isn't making me enjoy my time at all. Because everything kind of revolves around your applied instrument, right? Like that is your main drive and your main focus.

Due to her distress, Charlotte considered dropping out. However, she expressed her concerns to the dean who was supportive and assigned her a new professor with whom she felt more compatible.

Max indicated that most of her professors had been supportive and helpful, but that there were a few instances where professors lacked professionalism and made inappropriate comments (occasionally even ones with misogynistic connotations). She described an instance where a professor "bad mouthed" one of her peers, who was not present at the time, in front of the class. She explained that this teacher had a reputation for having a sensitive ego and she felt that music teachers of this kind tend to put unnecessary pressure on their students to be overly invested in their course. To support her statement, she explained that "if I miss one of my rehearsals, … my teacher's gonna be mad at me for the rest of the semester" – a reaction unlike that in her elective courses, where absences were typically accepted without such consequence. She recalled another negative experience with her college combo teacher, again illustrating the negative impacts that unconstructive student-teacher relationships can have on a student's relationship with music:

> He was also a drummer. And every rehearsal he would only ever tell me what I'm doing wrong. … it was to the point where everyone else was like, 'okay, like, it's weird, but also bad because like, we're also making mistakes, but he's just not addressing us at all.' … And so, I just constantly felt like I just wasn't good at all.

While Noah did not mention having any notable negative interactions with his teachers, he did mention that students in his music program occasionally needed to prod their teachers in order to gain feedback. While he felt he lacked support from his professors during these times, he also felt that he had the independence and discipline to seek out the feedback or direction he needed.

Theme 2c: Burnout

All three participants indicated that burnout was a common issue amongst music students that impacted their relationships with music. Moreover, they all speculated on the risk of burnout post-graduation if they continued to be employed in a music related job.

Charlotte experienced a sense of burnout in the final year of her bachelor's and spoke about how a music student's course schedule can be more demanding than in other disciplines. "So, in other degrees you take four or five courses for a full course load. In music you take seven," adding that there was one semester where she was taking 10 courses.

> It's just so intense for … a long four years. So, … I really understand the burnout and I understand everyone that's like, 'and I'm gonna go do something else because that was really intense, and I don't see it going forward.'

Charlotte felt confident that she would go on to do a master's in music therapy in the future but admitted that if it weren't for that, she would probably have considered a change in career path, and "take on another passion", perhaps one unrelated to music. She was also worried about future burnout when entering the field as an educator because many music educator acquaintances of hers had experienced burnout within the first 5 years of their careers. Charlotte believed that combining one's passion, education, and career can be beneficial, but that this combination can also be exhausting, leading to potential negative impacts on one's relationship with music and their instrument.

Similar to Charlotte, Max also described how a heavy course load can lead to feelings of burnout, specifying that there is an added pressure for students who were expected to play on each other's end-of-year evaluations (on top of the work they need to prepare for their own evaluations). Max acknowledged that to a certain extent, it is normal to experience higher and lower periods of stress within academic environments. However, she acknowledged the negative effects that stress had on her own relationship with her primary instrument, stating that "the feeling of burnout was really … not great for … me learning to … love the drums." She expressed concern that peers who might feel relief when taking a break from school will terminate their relationship with their instrument and/or with music altogether. "I just think that music is so beautiful and … it comes from the soul and everything. And if you're forcing it and you're just making it so academic that, it makes sense that a lot of people are going to drop it or they're going to fall out of love with music and … switch to something else." When discussing music as a profession, Max felt it is important for musicians to maintain a stable relationship with their instrument and minimize these "highs" and "lows", and that they play because they want to, "… not because we have to…"

Noah's reflections on burnout were linked to the compromises he felt he would have to start making during his degree in order to be able to support himself in a music career. These concerns emerged from observing his peers who were already getting professional experience in the field, such as gigging. As previously mentioned, Noah felt limited in accessing these

opportunities due to the demands of completing a double major. In watching his peers navigate the early stages of their professional work, he noticed that those…

> who were getting work and who were really being able to, to sustain themselves in a music career were certainly taking sacrifices as far as … what they would perform or, or what they would write, … they were … doing things that they didn't necessarily love all the time. Because that would advance their careers more.

This observation led Noah to worry about the types of compromises musicians make in order to live sustainably and led to impacts on his own relationship with music, stating that "rather than just being curious and transcribing, creating things that sound good to me, I'm trying to think about how I can do that and also create something that other people can enjoy or that could get me a job somewhere." Given that he would graduate with two contrasting bachelors, he expressed uncertainty about whether pursuing a career in music would be the right choice for him. He explained that perhaps the instability of this career path might lead to burnout, and a strained relationship with music, stating that, "music needs to be … approached in a healthy manner."

The participants of this study all mentioned how they strive to find a work-life balance, but that this can be challenging in the field of music due to the extensive hours of practice required to continuously maintain/improve your musical skills and the potential instability of the career— factors they acknowledged as contributing to a damaged relationship with music and the risk of burnout.

Category 3: Students' Perspectives on Engaging in Music Therapy to Foster/Maintain a Constructive Relationship with Music

Charlotte, Max, and Noah, all expressed an openness to participating in music therapy should that resource be offered to them now and/or during their training. As indicated in Chapter 3, participants were provided with a definition of music therapy that was situated within the context of the present research (see Appendix E). Based on this definition, and any other previous knowledge that they may have had about the profession, participants were asked if they thought that music therapy might be helpful in supporting undergraduate music students to maintain or nurture their relationships with music and/or their primary instrument and to explain why or why not. They were also asked if they would be/have been open to participating in music therapy sessions if that service was available to them.

Theme 3a: Potential benefits

All the interviewees agreed that music therapy could be a beneficial resource for music students to help maintain and/or improve their well-being as well as their relationship with music. Charlotte highlighted that musicians have already developed certain musical interpretation and expression skills (i.e., applying music theory knowledge to effectively convey the emotional or narrative intent of a piece) that could be useful within music therapy contexts. Despite her belief that music students may feel emotionally and musically vulnerable in music therapy and that this may pose a challenge, she also felt that music therapy could potentially address goal related to these areas. These goals could include identifying and expressing one's own emotions through music, as well as decreasing the discomfort that accompanies feelings related to vulnerability. Max also spoke about the potential challenge in exposing music student clients to the thing (i.e., music) that is causing challenges to their relationships with music and/or their primary instrument. However, she also highlighted that this could also be the driving force to justify seeking this form of help. Lastly, Noah suggested that music therapy could promote overall well-being and give university music student clients a needed space for musical exploration free from the external pressures and stressors that often accompany performance and practice.

Theme 3b: Session Format (Group vs. Individual Sessions & Instrument Choice)

Depending on the potential goals being addressed, two participants expressed session format preferences. For example, Noah expressed a potential personal preference for individual rather than group music therapy sessions. He explained that group musical contexts, such as jam sessions, were often accompanied by stress and feelings of having to prove one's musical abilities, however "doing it [music therapy] individually completely removes any sort of … external pressure that could come with being in a group." He also mentioned that music students might benefit from engaging in music therapy using instruments other than their primary instrument. He explained that: "As lovely as the drums are, … I have a lot of history with the instrument and … there's no way to just erase that completely when I sit down at the drums." Max shared a similar sentiment but alternatively speculated that using one's primary instrument in a music therapy session might help the music student client to reconnect with that instrument, if this is one of the client's goals. Charlotte did not indicate any preference relating to music therapy session format in her interview.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I will begin by summarizing implications of the results outlined in Chapter 4, specifically in relation to how music therapy may potentially be used to foster and/or repair undergraduate music students' relationships with music (i.e., the final subsidiary question). While these implications for practice are based on the experiences of only three participants (with a few relevant links made to literature), they provide an initial framework that can serve as a practical guide for music therapists who are wanting to engage in this area of work. They also suggest that music therapists could more carefully consider the relevance of their clients' relationships with music within the context of their music therapy processes. The sections that follow include limitations of the present study, implications of this study for music therapy education and advocacy, recommendations for future research, and closing remarks.

Implications for Music Therapy Practice

Although further research is needed, the results of the present study imply certain considerations, as well as potential goal areas, that music therapists should consider when engaging in music therapy work with university music students. Mainly, music therapists should be conscious that university music students may have complex relationships with music that have been forged by an array of life circumstances and music experiences. Therefore, the therapeutic tool being used (i.e., music) can run the risk of triggering negative responses from clients who might associate music, or particular instruments, with negative, or even traumatic, music training experiences. In the present study, Max and Noah speculated that it might be challenging to use their primary instrument within a music therapy context. Max however, indicated that her primary instrument, the drums, helped her to release feelings of anger. This suggests that in some cases, incorporating a client's primary instrument into music therapy sessions may be beneficial. Additionally, if a client is experiencing difficulties specifically related to their relationship with their primary instrument, the safety of a supportive therapeutic relationship can provide a meaningful space to process and explore this issue in a constructive way. That being said, the participants of the present study seemed to focus on active methods of music therapy (i.e., engaging in music-making processes). As previously indicated in the literature review chapter, methods of music therapy such as GIM (or adaptations of GIM) (Martin, 2015; Trondalen, 2010) might also be effective in addressing challenges indicated by the participants (e.g., reduced performance quality due to anxiety).

In deciding whether individual or group sessions are indicated when working with university music students, music therapists should also pay close attention to the benefits and potential drawbacks of each. As mentioned by Noah, individual sessions may remove some of the pressure that musicians often face when playing in group settings. This may be particularly relevant for music students that tend to compare themselves to others; a habit that was noted across all three study participants. On the other hand, group music therapy can also positively impact interpersonal relationships in musical group contexts as seen in Ahonen and Lee's (2011) music therapy work with a professional string quartet.

It is important to highlight how formal (i.e., clinical) music therapy processes, goals, and methods can address specific challenges revealed in the cross-case analysis. While some students may already use music in ways that feel therapeutic (as was noted in Max's narrative summary, see Chapter 4), this does not eliminate the need for a trained music therapist. Rather, it emphasizes the value of a music therapist whose role is to provide a structured, and emotionally safe environment in which to support the processes involved in therapeutic work with musicians. These processes may include increasing a sense of self-actualization, self-efficacy, and/or well-being as well as addressing physical injuries that musicians often experience (Trondalen, 2013). Additionally, improving one's ability to identify and express emotions musically is a viable music therapy goal that can in turn address anxiety (Jackson, 2013). This perspective was expressed by Charlotte, who felt that music students might struggle to transfer musical expression skills (acquired through education) into a therapeutic context where the purpose is to explore one's own emotions on a deeper level and perhaps in more vulnerable ways (i.e., the norms and expectations are different in therapy versus education contexts).

Finally, Brooks (2013) provides detailed guidelines on how to use all four music therapy methods (receptive, re-creational, compositional, and improvisational) to address professional burnout. Given that all three participants raised concerns related to burn out, these guidelines could be adapted for university music students. Potential goals include promoting relaxation, self-empowerment, experiencing healthy competition, and maintaining a sense of identity when feeling overwhelmed or stressed (Brooks, 2013).

Limitations

This research had some limitations which must be acknowledged. First, it is important to note that the results are based on the unique experiences of three participants and not

representative of the undergraduate music student population as a whole. Second, this was the first time that I conducted research interviews. There were times where I had difficulty keeping the participants on topic and/or challenges in getting them to *go deeper* in their responses, and as such, there are some places where more information would have further enriched the data. Third, the recruitment process was lengthy, meaning that there were long periods between the interviews making it difficult for my interview skills to remain sharp. Lastly, defining music therapy to the participants within the context of this study proved to be challenging. Although each participant was provided with a definition prior to the interview (which they all confirmed having read), they all requested that I redefine it during the interview. Participants' limited understanding of music therapy likely influenced the results of the study, specifically in relation to how they envisioned music therapy for themselves or other university music students.

While I tried to put them aside, some of my assumptions going into this research (outlined in Chapter 1) may still have inadvertently influenced the data collection and analysis processes. For example, I assumed that musicians may benefit from music therapy in significant ways, given that many already engage with music as a means of expression. Perhaps when conducting the interviews, I could have encouraged participants to take more time to reflect more specifically on potential contraindications. I also assumed that studying music at a post-secondary level (i.e., university) would impact each student's relationship with music in some way. While this may be true, it may also be the case that music students who volunteered included those who were drawn to the topic because in one way or another, they all had managed to successfully navigate some aspects of their own relationships with music. However, the three participants also all referenced peers who had succumbed to identified stressors, lost their passion for music, and abandoned their musical pursuits (i.e., they drop out). The unique perspectives of these types of individuals may not be well-represented in the present study.

Implications for Music Therapy Education and Advocacy

Given the potential of music therapy to support undergraduate music students (as indicated by the results in this study), music therapy education programs could further integrate clinical approaches with musicians into the didactic and practicum curriculum. It is also important for music therapy students to have formal opportunities within their training to explore their own relationships with music. Students could also be encouraged to seek out their own music therapy (outside of the educational context) as a means of exploring and better

understanding their own relationships with music and how this might influence (positively and/or negatively) the work they are doing with clients.

Finally, the documented processes and results of this study may help music therapists and others to advocate for access to music therapy services for undergraduate music students. This research paper may heighten awareness of the challenges faced by this population, and the potential music therapy holds to address identified challenges and support and/or maintain undergraduate music students' health and well-being.

Recommendations for Future Research

As seen in Chapter 2, research on the use of music therapy with musicians and music students specifically, is scarce. Future research could continue to explore how *musicians* versus *non-musicians* relate to music, which could contribute to a better understanding of similarities and distinct differences, which in turn could inform music therapy practice. This research could also provide further insight into the intricate constructs which comprise individuals' relationships with music and how these are impacted by various factors. Further research that examines the relationships that music students and/or other musicians have with their primary instrument could also provide additional valuable insights and build upon the results of the present study. Given that the results of this research also highlighted music students' experience/risk of burnout, it would be interesting to use the guidelines provided by Brooks (2013) and explore how they could be adapted and applied specifically with musicians. Lastly, since existing literature on the use of music therapy with music students has only explored two of the main four music therapy intervention methods (receptive and improvisational; Bruscia, 2014), research that explores the re-creative and compositional methods could potentially expand the scope of practice in this area.

Closing Remarks

The process and outcomes of the present research holds great meaning for me as a musician, music educator, music therapist and first-time researcher. As a musician, hearing the stories of the participants has allowed me to make comparisons and reflect upon my own relationship with music. This, in turn, revealed areas of further work for me so that I can connect to my art more deeply and meaningfully. I have also become more aware of the impact I have on my music students as a music educator and how I can further support their development in ways that will contribute to their musical growth and passion. Finally, as a music therapist and researcher, this inquiry has inspired my interest in continuing to explore this topic both

professionally and academically. I would be interested in pursuing further research in this area and eventually have the opportunity to offer my music therapy services to students enrolled in university music programs.

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Appendix A

CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY
FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Name of Applicant:	Isabella Rachiele
Department:	Faculty of Fine Arts\Creative Arts Therapies
Agency:	N/A
Title of Project:	Undergraduate Music Students' Perspectives on how their Training Experiences have Affected their Relationship with Music and Potential Implications for Music Therapy
Certification Number:	30019275

Valid From: December 21, 2023 To: December 20, 2024

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

Richard DeMont

Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix B

Participant Recruitment E-Mail

Subject: Recruiting Participants for Study on: Undergraduate Music Students' Perspectives on how their Training Experiences have Affected their Relationship with Music and Potential Implications for Music Therapy

Hello,

My name is Isabella Rachiele, and I am a music therapy graduate student from Concordia University in Montreal. I am reaching out to university music programs across Canada to ask for help in distributing recruitment information for my master's research project. My master's thesis is a qualitative interview study that will ask students to share their perspectives on how their undergraduate music training experiences have affected their relationship with music and explore potential implications for how music therapy could potentially serve as a personal resource for undergraduate music students, specifically with regard to fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music.

My study has been approved by Concordia University's Human Research Ethics Committee (UHREC) (Protocol #30019275) and is supervised by Dr. Laurel Young (certified music therapist, researcher, and associate professor at Concordia University).

Below and attached, please find recruitment information (including eligibility criteria) to share with your students and faculty (for distribution). Please note that participants will take part in this research as individuals and will not be representing their university or music program. Absolutely no information pertaining to the identity of their training programs or universities will be included in the research paper.

If you are not the appropriate contact, please let me know who is or feel free to forward this information to that person. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Cordially,

Isabella Rachiele
isabellarachiele@mail.concordia.ca

Dear student,

This is an invitation to participate in a research study being conducted by Isabella Rachiele under the supervision of Dr. Laurel Young at Concordia University. This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Music Therapy program (research thesis option) at Concordia University and has received approval from Concordia's Human Research Ethics Committee (protocol #30019275)

Participation in this study will be limited to the first 3 participants who contact the researcher, meet the criteria listed below, provide informed consent, and do not withdraw from the study.

What is expected of participants in this study?

Each participant will be asked to participate in an individual online interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. They will answer questions regarding their learning experiences as an undergraduate music student and how these experiences have or have not influenced their relationship with music. Interviews will be audio recorded and conducted in English or French according to each participant's preference. One week prior to the interview (5 business days), an interview guide and a definition/brief description of music therapy will be provided for review. Participants will be sent the transcript of their interview within 5-10 business days after their interview and will have up to 10 business days to make any desired adjustments to their transcript. Participants may withdraw from the study at any point up until 10 business days after their interview. If a participant withdraws, their data will be immediately destroyed and will not be included in the study.

Eligibility

The researcher is seeking 3 undergraduate music students meeting the following criteria:

- Participants must be at least 18 years of age.
- Participants must be in the process of completing their first bachelor's degree.
- Participants must be enrolled as a full-time student in their final year of a bachelor's degree in music (BMus or equivalent, including streams such as general, performance, education, composition, etc.).
- Participants are not required to have any prior experience or knowledge about the field of music therapy.
- Fluent in English or French.

Confidentiality

Participation in this research is voluntary and confidential. Please also note that participants will take part in this research as individuals and will not be representing their university or music program. Absolutely no information pertaining to the identity of your training program or university will be included in the research paper.

There is no remuneration for participating in this study.

If interested, please contact me (Isabella Rachiele) at isabella.rachiele@mail.concordia.ca.

Please feel free to contact me, or my research supervisor, with any concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

Researcher: Isabella Rachiele (MTA)
Department of Creative Arts Therapies
Concordia University
isabella.rachiele@mail.concordia.ca

Faculty Research Supervisor: Laurel Young (PhD, MTA)
Department of Creative Arts Therapies
Concordia University
laurel.young@concordia.ca

Appendix C

INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM (Protocol #30019275)

Study Title: Undergraduate Music Students' Experiences and the Potential for Music Therapy to Support a Constructive Relationship with Music: A Qualitative Study
Researcher: Isabella Rachiele, Master's student in Creative Arts Therapies (Research Thesis Option)
Researcher's Contact Information: isabella.rachiele@mail.concordia.ca
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Laurel Young, PHD, MTA, Associate Professor in Music Therapy, Creative Arts Therapies
Faculty Supervisor's Contact Information: S-ER 127 ER Building, 2155 Guy St. 514-848-2424 ext. 4682, laurel.young@concordia.ca
Source of funding for the study: N/A

You are being invited to participate in the research study mentioned above. This form provides information about what participating would mean. Please read it carefully before deciding if you want to participate or not. If there is anything you do not understand, or if you want more information, please ask the researcher.

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of the research is:
To understand undergraduate music students' perceptions on how their university music training experiences have changed their relationships with music.
To explore (in theory) how music therapy could potentially serve as a personal resource for undergraduate music students, specifically with regard to fostering and/or maintaining a constructive relationship with music.

B. PROCEDURES

Upon receipt of a signed consent form, the researcher will contact you via e-mail to set a mutually convenient time for an online videoconference call in which you will partake in a one-on-one interview lasting no more than 60 minutes. One week (5 business days) prior to the scheduled interview date, you will be sent an interview guide as well as a document containing a brief description of how music therapy is defined within the context of this study. Participants are encouraged to read these documents before the interview, but it is not mandatory.

During the interview, you may ask questions, refuse to answer a question or end the interview, at any given time.

It should be noted that interviews will be audio and video recorded, and transcribed verbatim, all of which will be safely stored on passcode-locked devices (the use of cloud servers is prohibited). These recordings will not be disseminated and are solely used for the purpose of transcription and data analysis.

The transcribed interview will be sent to you within 5 business days after the interview takes place. If there is anything you would like to modify from the transcription, you have up to 10 business days to send a revised copy of the transcription. If you do not respond within the given timeframe, it will be assumed that no revisions are required.

In total, participating in this study will take less than 2 hours. This includes time allotted for whether the participant chooses to review the interview guide and music therapy definition document before the interview, the maximum interview duration, as well as time spent making corrections to their transcript after the interview.

C. RISKS AND BENEFITS

This research contains minimal risks. You might face feelings of discomfort during the interview process and some difficult emotions might arise. Prior to the interview, the researcher will provide you with a list of resources should you need additional support processing anything that may have come up for you during the interview. You will also be reminded that you have a choice to refuse any question or end the interview at any point.

Potential benefits from participating in this study include the opportunity for you to reflect on your personal relationship with music, and gaining a further insight on what has affected your relationship with music.

D. CONFIDENTIALITY

The identity of each participant in this research will remain confidential. There is a small risk that you will be identifiable if you describe a specific incidence that someone reading the study will be able to recognize, however the researcher will make an effort to only include necessary information in order to avoid this scenario. Any direct quotes used in the report will be cleared of any identifiers.

It is important to note that participants will take part in this research as individuals and will not be representing the institution they attend or have attended. The names of these will not be included in this study.

The researcher will not allow anyone to access the information, except people directly involved in conducting the research (i.e., the principal researcher and faculty supervisor). We will only use the information for the purposes of the research described in this form.

The researcher will protect the information according to the following:

Recorded data (i.e., interview video and audio recordings) will be transferred to a passcode-locked device (i.e., MacBook Pro) and external hard drive within 24 hours of its collection. The researcher is the only holder of the passwords used to unlock these devices.
The passcode-locked back-up drive, as well as any physical data, will be stored in a locked compartment in the researcher's home. The researcher is the only holder of the passcodes used to unlock the hard drive and compartment.
Each interview transcript will be saved as a separate password-protected Word document on the passcode-locked devices mentioned above. The researcher and faculty supervisor are the only individuals with access to the documents containing interview transcripts, along with the participant with their corresponding transcript.
The use of any cloud server will be prohibited.

We intend to publish the results of the research. However, it will not be possible to identify you in the published results.

The researcher will destroy all raw data five years after the end of the study (i.e., the study is deemed complete once it has been published to Concordia's open-access online research repository: Spectrum).

E. CONDITIONS OF PARTICIPATION

You do not have to participate in this research. It is purely your decision. If you do participate, you can stop at any time. You can also ask that the information you provided not be used, and your choice will be respected. If you decide that you don't want us to use your information, you must tell the researcher any time until 10 business days after the interview takes place. If you withdraw before this deadline, your data will be destroyed and will not be included as part of the research.

There are no negative consequences for not participating, stopping in the middle, or asking us not to use your information.

F. PARTICIPANT'S DECLARATION

I have read and understood this form. I have had the chance to ask questions and any questions have been answered. I agree to participate in this research under the conditions described.

NAME (please print)

_____

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

If you have questions about the scientific or scholarly aspects of this research, please contact the researcher. Their contact information is on page 1. You may also contact their faculty supervisor.

If you have concerns about ethical issues in this research, please contact the Manager, Research Ethics, Concordia University, 514.848.2424 ex. 7481 or oor.ethics@concordia.ca.

Appendix D

Interview Guide

1. Why did you decide to pursue a degree/career in music?
2. What is your primary instrument and how did you come to choose this as your primary instrument?
3. How would you describe your relationship with music, prior to your undergraduate studies?
4. How would you describe your relationship with your primary instrument prior to your undergraduate studies?
5. How has your relationship with music and/or your primary instrument changed or evolved since you started your undergraduate music studies?
6. Can you describe an experience within the context of your undergraduate music degree that has had a positive or helpful impact on your relationship with music and/or your primary instrument? You can give more than one example, if you wish.
7. Can you describe an experience within the context of your undergraduate music degree that had a negative/unhelpful impact on your relationship with music and/or your primary instrument? You can give more than one example, if you wish.
8. What kinds of supports or resources do you feel might be useful in helping undergraduate music students nurture their relationships with music and/or their primary instrument?
9. In addition to the description you were given, do you have any other knowledge about the field and practice of music therapy? Please share what you know. Do you have any questions you would like to ask me about music therapy?
10. Based on the definition you were given and on your own present knowledge of music therapy, do you think that music therapy might be helpful in supporting undergraduate music students to maintain or nurture their relationships with music/primary instrument? Why or why not?
11. Would you be open to participating in music therapy sessions, if that service were to be made be available to you? Why or why not?

Appendix E

Definition of Music Therapy Within the Context of the Present Research

Music therapy is a professional discipline wherein active and receptive music experiences and the relationships that develop through these experiences are used as the to support and promote individuals' health and well-being goals within various domains of functioning (mental, physical, social, spiritual, musical, &/or ecological). In music therapy sessions (group or individual), experiences can include focused music listening (live or recorded), composing music/songwriting, instrument/vocal improvisation, and/or recreating pre-composed pieces of music in personalized ways. While no formal musical training or knowledge is required for someone to participate in a music therapy process, musicians may choose to work with a music therapist to explore how they may engage with music and/or engage with others through music as a means of personal healing, growth, and support. Verbal discussion may also be integrated into this process in relation to the client's health and well-being goals.

Time will be allotted during the interview for the researcher (a certified music therapist) to answer questions you may have about music therapy within the context of the present study.