

The Dark Side of the Moon:  
Raising Emotional Awareness in Men through Music

INSEAD

Executive Master in Consulting and Coaching for Change

Thesis

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2018

## **Abstract**

Can music be a means of raising emotional awareness in men? This thesis explores whether music, set in a particular context, enables men to connect with and express themselves on a more emotional level. Studies show how many men struggle to cope with expressing themselves emotionally, or avoiding altogether certain emotions. This can lead to destructive behaviour to self and others, be that at work and / or at home and in many cases, suggests depression. Studies show that depression in men and women is not recognised, nor dealt with in the same way. The qualitative approach was done through action research with two musical workshops and six male participants, who were interviewed after each session using an Interpretative phenomenological analysis methodology (IPA). The findings confirmed that participating in a facilitated, group interaction with a musician allowed for discussions and reflections linked to ‘deeper’ emotions, also due to the safe space of the intervention. The interviews that followed reinforced the unconscious concern many men can have of seeming vulnerable and exposed, by acknowledging and admitting to certain emotions that are not frequently shared.

**Keywords:** Emotional awareness, Depression, Gender, Music, Therapy, Vulnerability, Adventure therapy, Group coaching, Transitional space

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## Introduction

James Brown once sang, 'It's a Man's, Man's, Man's World. Apparently it was felt important to repeat 'man', three times in the title, clearly to make a point. Even the monthly musical magazine, Rolling Stone, referred to the song as biblically chauvinistic. Living in a man's (man's, man's) world is helpful to nobody and yet this continues to be the case and although it is without argument who gets the raw deal in such a world, it does also negatively impact men.

Recently, my nine year old son came home after playing with friends in our village, visibly upset from something that had happened. As he began to explain between short, emotional breaths that he had accidentally knocked over a decrepit wall and how he had been told off by the mayor, ridiculed in front of his friends and felt threatened, he confided that he did all he could to not cry in front of him. With this, tears flowed and his reaction triggered memories from my childhood, of being scolded for something and not being allowed to cry about it, "Don't be such a baby, stop it"! Although I have seen my father's eyes well up on very rare occasions, I have never seen him cry and as for my grandfathers, men who had experienced the Second World War, they would recount events of great distress that words cannot describe, delivered very factually and on occasions, with humour.

UK National Health Services 2014 statistics show that mental health problems were more prevalent in women than in men and significantly so with anxiety related disorders, yet 78% suicides were male. This gender imbalance towards mental health is not surprising and has been the case, probably since the beginning of time. Men pushing mental disorders on women can be traced back to ancient Greek medical practitioners and philosophers, with such symptoms of delusion and hysteria diagnosed as the wandering womb, dislocated and pushing organs internally to much distress. In literature, the madness of Shakespeare's Ophelia is quite different to that of Hamlet's, hers being due to her weakness and it being exacerbated by losing the important men in her life and therefore her identity, whereas Hamlet's melancholy is fed by the gnawing need for revenge after speaking with his dead father, in the form of a ghost nonetheless.

It is not difficult to argue that a male dominated world is very much the source of the problem. By not making it socially acceptable to express certain emotions that suggest vulnerability, or worse, weakness, inevitably creates a repressed unconscious place within that can lead many to depression. There is a tendency for depression in men to not be recognised because it is perceived as unmanly. There are

indeed telltale signs of depression that are typically associated with men, such as alcohol, drug and domestic abuse, gambling, etc. but what about working overly long hours (OECD 2017), always striving to exceed targets, controlling behaviour, cognitive enhancing drugs, excessive physical exercising, the mainstream acceptance of extreme sports or waking up and falling asleep to mobile devices? Studies prove that professional therapy is the most impactful means to tackling depression, yet it is challenging for men to recognise and admit to it, before even considering support and how to seek what suits them best.

Music is by no means THE cure for depression. Emotional awareness of self and others, however, is a step towards dealing more constructively with negative emotions and certain triggers linked to depression. Studies show that recognising and identifying such emotions, or ‘naming the pain’, can be a powerful means of helping people deal with strong negative emotions (Lieberman, Ingagaki, Tabibnia and Crockett 2011). Can music be a means of raising our emotional awareness? Research on music therapy has found that it can be a safe and effective treatment for a wide range of disorders, including depression. An article on the effects of music and music therapy on mood in neurological patients, *The World Journal of Psychiatry*, found that in addition to reducing depression and anxiety in patients suffering from neurological conditions, music therapy showed no negative side effects, meaning it is a very safe and low-risk approach to treatment (Raglio, A. Attardo, L. Gontero, G. Rollino, S. Groppo, E. Granieri, E. 2015).

I have always been a music lover, with songs I will never forget, accompanying me throughout my life in different moments, places, alone and with people. It is only recently that I wonder if this love for music started from the moment I heard the beating of my mother's heart as I grew in her womb. Music has been present throughout history in all cultures with some of the oldest artifacts excavated from human sites revealing musical instruments. Music is and has been omnipresent in our lives; weddings, funerals, rituals, wars, nursery rhymes, national anthems, lifts, hotel lobbies, call centres, taxis, the list goes on. Up until recently, music was up there with walking and breathing. Communities would pass on historical events across generations through song and of course, the work songs, using the rhythm to pass the time and stay in time as they laboured through their days. Music can also be soothing, taking a distressed baby to a calmer mood with nursery rhymes. In films, music can influence how we perceive the story that is being told, suspense drawn out by certain musical sounds and rhythms, signaling what is about to happen. The original version of the film, Blade Runner and the director's cut, have a very different feel to them, not only because the voice over of Harrison Ford was removed, but also where the music had been edited or removed altogether.

Recent neurological tests made by Daniel Levitin (Levitin 2006), have found that music is not processed in the right hemisphere as was previously thought, but distributed throughout, engaging almost every part of the brain that has so far been identified. Can this 'full on' engagement with music be an effective means of disassociation for men to bring their guard down on certain topics and emotions? In the 20 years of working in education, I have had the fortune of observing how music can be used to teach languages, surface insightful reflections on team dynamics with a chamber orchestra, synchronicity and trust from jazz musicians who had never played with each other before and cultural awareness through djembe workshops. Music can also be intimidating, not only because we now live in an epoch where we only dare to sing or play an instrument if we are remotely decent at it, but also because certain musical genres are not so accessible to everybody.

Through a series of wonderful circumstances, I have found myself, along with likeminded friends, organising intimate concerts with professional singer songwriters. Without exception, each musician I have interacted with and observed, conveyed a high level of authenticity and emotional intelligence. Audiences at these concerts have varied in ages, from five to seventy-five and each time, a meaningful moment was shared with insightful emotions and reflections raised from many (Admittedly, a five year old did once ask where the sweets were as we introduced a singer to the audience).

This brings me to the question of the thesis; can popular music, music we hear everywhere, possibly every day and easily accessible to all, be a means of raising emotional awareness in professional men in a group environment?

### **Research Aims and Objectives**

I would like to explore whether using music, delivered in a particular format and environment, can raise emotional awareness in self and others, in this case focusing on men. If emotional awareness is spiked in the participant through such an experiential exercise, can this lead to richer relational exchanges with others, and in some cases, allowing to expose oneself with less concern for feeling vulnerable?

The questions related to the objectives are:

- Can popular music tap into one's emotions in a non-threatening, 'safe way'?
- Has the method used been impactful?
- Has the method used provided insightful information?
- What were the experiences during and after the experiential exercises?
- What are the limitations

## **Literature Review**

Little is known about how music can be used as an alternative means of creating a safe space for men to discover, express, and explore their emotions. This literature review had two main objectives; one was to identify and consider key approaches and frameworks when working with groups and group dynamics in order to prepare for the intervention. The second objective was to explore whether such an intervention had been delivered before and if not, does it have the potential to be developed into an experiential exercise linked to raising emotional awareness in men.

The key topics identified were:

- Music therapy
- Depression in men
- Adventure therapy approach for men
- Psychodynamic approach to group coaching
- Night vision
- Holding and Containment
- Emotional intelligence and vulnerability
- Mindfulness



## **Music therapy**

Steiner and Hall (2017), describe how when we interact with art, in its many forms, we allow ourselves to give in to the experience, going wherever the art leads us, suspending our thoughts of daily life and are able to access a deeper part of ourselves. Thomas Merton (1955) stated how with art, we simultaneously both find ourselves and lose ourselves.

According to the American Music Therapy Association, “Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualised goals within a therapeutic relationship”. Different forms of music therapy can be traced back to ancient civilizations, with the earliest reference appearing in the early 1800s, from the *Columbian Magazine* titled "Music Physically Considered." The unsigned article, written it would appear by a medical practitioner, concludes, “What I have principally to observe from the foregoing inductions (music used for therapy) is that the soul being affected in a particular manner, has a power of producing considerable changes in the corporal system”. (1789).

Music therapy in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was very much a result of the two world wars, where music would be played in hospitals to veterans, suffering not only physically, but also from emotional trauma. This led to the US Army incorporating music as part of their reconditioning programme for such patients.

Music therapy interventions vary and can include, but not limited to, improvisation, songwriting, lyric interpretation, and listening to and singing familiar songs. It is used with patient’s suffering from cognitive disorders, using rhythm to facilitate motor skills, or to achieve a deep state of relaxation when preparing for surgery, childbirth, or chemotherapy. It is also used for treatment on autism, language and dementia and to help individuals improve their state of well-being by reducing certain stress levels linked to daily life. Music therapists who deliver such interventions are typically trained in psychology, biology, and neurology.

The Mental Health Foundation (2016), reported that evidence suggests music therapy, when combined with standard care, is effective for improving depression symptoms. Uttley et al. (2015) found that patients receiving art therapy for non-psychotic mental problems (such as depression, anxiety or trauma) had positive improvements in their mental health symptoms.

Beyond the clear boundaries of music therapy, music is also employed through experiential exercises and workshops in business education. Experiential exercises encourage participants "...to recognise and reflect upon their interpersonal style and to identify areas which need to be developed" (Hall, Hall & Abaci, 1997). The objective of these exercises can be to incite impactful reflections on leadership and group dynamics with working professionals who observe and exchange with the conductor of an orchestra, drawing parallels to managing experienced musicians to deliver a classical piece of music (Merck Orchestra and INSEAD) and managing teams. Djembe workshops, with participants playing drums, can be applied to teams tackling the change of pace through rhythm. I have not been able to source examples of and information on experiential exercises involving a singer songwriter and business leaders and professionals on emotional awareness. Needless to say, the impact of the experiential exercise is not just from the tool being used, but how it is facilitated and applied.

## Depression in men

It is widely accepted that in most cultures, men are not supposed to be vulnerable and any suggestion of being weak, be that physical or emotional is perceived as negative and something to push through and rise above. By not naming the pain and in a way ignoring it, can transform it into a 'bad' emotion that should be kept secret and lead to problems that are typically associated to men, such as substance abuse, violence, physical ailments and even self-sabotaging careers and relationships (Isenhardt, 1993; McCreary, D.R. Saucier, D. M. Courtenay, W. H. 2005).

The perception of depression being unmanly can drive the problem even deeper, making it seem harder to recognise and admit to, let alone for a man to seek eventual help. The Mental Health Foundation in the UK found in 2013, that women were twice as likely to be diagnosed with mental health and anxiety related issues compared to men, yet three out of four suicides were male (Mental Health Foundation Report 2016). Whilst depression being similar in both sexes, men and women deal with their emotions differently, yet it is often treated in the same way. Men convey depression in a less recognisable way, linked to gender socialisation at a young age, where girls are encouraged to express themselves emotionally and foster deep connections, unlike boys, who are encouraged to be assertive and pay less attention to expressing themselves emotionally. In business, an assertive man is perceived as driven, whereas a woman is considered arrogant and pushy.

Terrence Real (1998) makes a convincing connection to this, explaining that boys and men tend to externalise pain and are more likely to feel victimized, resulting in expressing their distress through action. Taking the notion of externalising further, there are far more violent incidents linked to male psychiatric patients than women and more cases of self-mutilation by female psychiatric patients. Banishing the pain in such an extreme way not only hinders intimacy, it can lead to some men becoming psychologically dangerous. This is further supported by evidence of higher levels of depression including internalising symptoms when adhering to traditionally masculine norms. However, research on emotion socialization and coping suggests that adhering to these norms can lead to externalizing symptoms (Addis 2008).

### **Adventure therapy approach for men**

Adventure therapy is an alternative way of creating a safe space, as opposed to traditional group therapy and suggests that it encourages a deeper therapeutic process by being ‘out of the office’ and outdoors, participating in adventure activities. Such activities offer opportunities to quickly explore new perspectives and develop trust and discourages competition.

Single gendered exercises appear to favour a greater sense of camaraderie and empathy in the group (Scheinfeld and Rochen 2011) and create a more supportive environment where participants feel less threatened and allow for more personal issues to be shared and addressed (Hill 2007). The time spent in shared adventure activities can also provide a different outlet for men to express themselves more openly on an emotional and interpersonal level with further opportunities to process personal issues.

The action research used for this study is similar in that it is single gender and aims to explore the same phenomenon, but not through adventure activities.

### **Psychodynamic approach to group dynamics**

The psychodynamic approach to coaching, according to Kets de Vries and Cheak (2014), goes beyond the traditional and rational perspective and looks under the surface at the underlying irrational processes and dynamics that can govern human behaviour, explaining that many of our actions are heavily influenced through past experiences and patterns from infancy. These are then carried into our adult lives and manifest in our interactions with friends, family and colleagues.

A lot is at stake when facilitating a group intervention. Participants entering a group may strive to preserve their individuality (Turquet 1975), establishing what are the boundaries of the group and the threat individuals might feel for their identity – how to be part of the group and at the same time preserve one’s identity? Individuals in group situations, ironically for the topic of the thesis, can have a sense of there being too much noise when interacting with a group of people. The individual can experience transference and countertransference (Kets de Vries, 2011) as past experiences trigger unconscious fears and emotions in their inner theatre (Kets de Vries, Korotov, & Florent-Treacy. 2007). Feeling like a stranger in a group can seem devastating for some people and creating a safe space (Bion 1970) for the success of a group intervention is key.

As the individual begins to relate to the members, an emerging relationship to the group is experienced where the individual is transitioning, not yet a full part of the group and in order to fully enter the group the individual needs to 'let go'. Successful groups exist when there is membership and preserved identity simultaneously, allowing the individual to be different, or otherwise threaten a sense of feeling lost in the group (Smith & Berg, 1987).

Giving up oneself to the group can feel euphoric, such as dancing without a care, as if no one is watching. There is a paradox in that regressing into the group can feel liberating and potentially repressive, making individuals behave awkwardly as they enter. According to Bion (Bion 1961), his theoretical framework suggests that groups function in two ways. The first is the Work Group Mentality, where members are able to share tensions, anxieties and relationships in order to function effectively, with the outcome being the capacity for realistic hard work. The second is the Basic Assumption Mentality, where the group is taken over by strong emotions, anxiety, fear, hate, love, etc. and as a result, loses touch. The outcome is stagnation.

What is clear is that groups experience conscious and unconscious processes that can lead to defensive and threatening behaviour. This can greatly influence the health of the group and individuals and in turn the outcome of the group's goal, be that at work, sports and in interventions. Creating an inclusive, safe environment that has boundaries to contain the functioning of the group is essential. Some of what has been covered here, is applicable, but not all, as the intervention was with a group who do not directly work together towards a common objective and did not have a shared past as a group.

## Night vision

There are three important ingredients to employing the psychodynamic approach, according to van de Loo and Lehman. They are the trinity of theory, technique and practice and using self as an instrument. Focusing briefly on the trinity of theory, the psychodynamic approach develops on this by also applying theory, technique and practice, but not on the individual, as is the case in psychoanalytical practice, but on the design and change required in leadership and organisations.

The relationship that is established between the coach and the coachee, or the facilitator and the group, is a source of valuable information and data that needs to be handled with great care and balance. Once engaged in an intervention, everyone becomes a part of the process, including the coach or facilitator, and the challenge is how to observe, participate, nudge and make sense of what is going on in the interaction whilst not being sucked into countless triggers of transference, counter-transference and potentially manipulating or being manipulated. This requires the facilitator to adopt a particular position that allows for the right amount of distance to be able to interact, yet observe, receive and reflect in a non-judgmental way to avoid making assumptions or jumping to conclusions.

Connected to using oneself as an instrument, adopting “night vision” is akin to opening ourselves up to seeing not only what is going on before our eyes, but also to potential unconscious factors that are connected beyond our awareness and possibly linked to the present (night vision level 1) and the past (night vision level 2). Just like trying to gauge the size of an iceberg from the deck of a ship, the viewpoint gives us some information about it. Add to this underwater images and this heightened state of perception provides us with even more valuable information that we kind of knew was there, but how deep, how wide and how it came to be, are some of the many observations and questions that can be made.

Van de Loo and Lehman (2016) propose two particular stances when using night vision. The first is applying night vision on oneself and the other when facilitating a group. With both, it is paramount to be in a consciously objective and non-judgmental state to allow for curiosity and wonder. With this comes, at times, surprising observations and questions that we can ask ourselves and if appropriate to others. The second way that night vision can be applied is when working with a group in a structured ‘Night visioning cycle’ of six stages.

Stage one is typically done through an experiential exercise that creates triggers, observations and wonder, requiring a different state of mind to explore possible unconscious factors linked to the trigger. Stage two involves putting logical, systemic thinking aside to go to a reflective space, embracing ambiguity and the unknown from whatever emotions and thoughts that come to mind. This sets up the group to the third stage of associating, with group members, sharing any feelings, thoughts, images and fantasies. By doing so, associations can add further information for making sense of something, or greater clarity on drivers and blockers. Interestingly and on the subject of music specifically, Steiner and Hall (2017) explain how it “encourages the default network to act like a bridge to our deeper emotions simmering below the surface. When contemplating a piece, our minds fall into a rest state and wander to past experiences or future constructions”. Raising the unconscious through the associations shared, takes the group to the fourth stage of spiking. Spiking refers to linking the conscious and the unconscious. This could be the realisation one might have for reacting systematically in a particular way in situations that trigger a past, painful experience. This recurring reaction is identified in the fifth stage as patterning. Not dissimilar to the process of hidden competing commitments, by recognising the pattern, the individual is able to move to the sixth stage of linking. Here, the enhanced emotional awareness from the night visioning cycle enables the individual to find ways in dealing with issues in a constructive way. I can see how the night vision cycle could be of great value to this particular intervention, but not wholly applicable for many reasons. The time of one hour did not allow for it and would take us off task. Could the intervention allow for such a process to be applied? I think so and for this, significant preparation and experience in the field would be required. However, using night vision on self, in this case, me facilitating the intervention, is relevant and of value.

## **Holding and containment**

The intention of the interventions was to explore what happens when we listen to a musician perform live, their music and what types of emotions, if any, do they trigger. Approaching this exploration in to the unknown made it clear that a reliable and safe environment needed to be established. I felt it therefore relevant to review holding and containment.

According to Winnicott, the holding environment focuses on the developmental stages in children, in which the child and mother are one entity and not yet differentiated in the infant's consciousness. The main purpose of "holding" is to allow the child to be completely unconscious of their requirement for a separate individual. Winnicott (1953) described this as "the space between inner and outer world, which is also the space between people—the transitional space—that intimate relationships and creativity occur." Martin Jordan developed on Winnicott's concept of a transitional space in order to "help us start to imagine other forms of emotionality which can exist within and between geographical and relational spaces, and between mind and nature" (Jordan 2015).

Wilfred Bion's concept of containment describes the holding environment as the space within which affect can be understood and contained (Bion, 1970). Symington & Symington (1996), view Bion's containment as an internal phenomenon, non-sensuous and "may be either integrating or destructive", which makes a distinction between the two concepts that I had initially interpreted as quite similar.

Assuming that certain emotions were to rise and potentially make some participants feel uncomfortable, defensive, passive, aggressive, etc, my role as a facilitator was not only to objectively observe and record what was happening, but to also be mindful of the participants and reinforce the environment as a safe place to explore and possibly be playful.



## **Emotional intelligence and vulnerability**

Emotional intelligence is defined in many ways and there tends to be a general consensus that it is the ability to process emotion and use that information effectively. Empathy is typically associated with emotional intelligence, because it relates to an individual connecting their personal experiences with those of others. Putting this in to the context of music, a singer songwriter will compose their song, usually triggered by something very personal, to then have the listener react to it and possibly adopt it as theirs. We can all think of a song that is personal to ourselves, as if it was written about us, or for us. Of course this is not empathy, but there is an interesting aspect that should be taken into consideration, with the question of what will a song trigger, when performed to small audience? Mayer, Salovey and Caruso, defined emotional intelligence as the “ability to recognise the meanings of emotions and their relationships, and to reason and problem-solve on the basis of them. Emotional intelligence is involved in the capacity to perceive emotions, assimilate emotion-related feelings, understand the information of those emotions, and manage them” (Mayer et al., 1999, 267).

There is an interesting link that can be made to vulnerability when observing a musician performing to an audience that has possibly never heard of them or their song before, delivering it in an authentic way and commonly not in the best environment to be truly heard and listened to, such as a noisy bar.

Vulnerability can be perceived as a lack of confidence, an uncertainty, or being in need. Brené Brown argues that vulnerability is not a weakness when used constructively and can be the foundation for honest, meaningful relationships. Regardless of gender, exposing ones vulnerability is not readily encouraged in society, especially in men. Brown suggests that vulnerability comes from shame and alienation (Brown, 2006); and successful individuals embrace vulnerability and derive connection from the experience (Brown, 2015).

## **Mindfulness**

Mindfulness is an effective method for grounding. That is to say, it can help a person to arrive into a focused space, or place and can have many positive effects. It is the process through accessible meditation practice of bringing one's attention to experiencing the present moment, A prominent figure in the practice of mindfulness, Jon Kabat-Zinn, claims that it can help people cope with stress, anxiety, pain, and illness. Kabat-Zinn was first introduced to Buddhism and meditation whilst studying at MIT for a Ph.D. in the early 1970's and later adapted the teachings on Buddhist mindfulness by removing religious connections and connotations. His definition of mindfulness is cultivating awareness by paying attention in a sustained and particular way: on purpose, in the present moment and non-judgmentally (Kabat-Zinn 2012).

I first came across mindfulness without realising it when attending antenatal classes with my wife, who was expecting our first child at the time. Some years later having become a considerably more stressed parent and professional, led me to attending mindfulness classes that indeed, helped to reduce anxiety and in my case, allow for space for self-reflection and reduce stress.

In the context of an intervention, a mindfulness exercise can be a means of bringing the participant into a more present state and space, favouring receptivity to reflective thinking.

### **Conclusion of the literature review**

Previous literature has found that creating a safe space is important (Englar-Carlson, 2006), because men may fear emotional expression, linked to feelings of shame and perceptions of vulnerability (Good & Fischer, 1997; Wong, Pituch, & Rochlen, 2006). Wong and Rochlen (2005) take this further by suggesting that sharing emotions without assistive activities can be unproductive for some men.

Although there are many outlets for group therapy work that can be effective for men, little has been written on group therapy for men, combined with live music. This thesis will report on the action research project, to address the gaps in the literature review.

## **Research Methodology**

The intention of observing the participant's experience and then interviewing them in an evolving process without really knowing what the outcome would be, made it evident that the qualitative approach would be the most appropriate (Creswell, 2007). My goal was to facilitate as little as possible during the workshops so as not to influence the outcome, as well as provide greater space to observe in order to describe the lived experience, hence adopting a phenomenological stance.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) focuses on "the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon", (Creswell, 2007). This overarching approach was most relevant as the results of the research study relied heavily on exploring the phenomenon of how individuals react to live music when performed to them in a small group setting. IPA has a dual interpretation process consisting of not only the participant making sense of their interpretations, but for the researcher to then make meaning from the participant's narratives, and to go deeper by decoding the data drawn from the exercises. This in turn provides the researcher with information to identify emerging themes in order to provide insightful information into the phenomenon. (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012).

Action research provides an exploratory environment, which in-turn can lead to discoveries. This lens allows for emergent themes to unfold over time with a closer 'insider' perspective to generate insights about the experience (Gephart, 2004). Action research, according to Reason and Bradbury, seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice (Reason, P. Bradbury, H., 2008).

Adding to this process, interviews were held after each exercise to gain further insights and reflections from the participant's experience. This would also provide further data to support, or question any identified themes that might emerge. Similar to the group experiences, I reinforced that no consensus on any topic was required to allow the participants to share their feelings and insights without feeling threatened (Krueger, 1988).

## **Description of the Research Setting**

A focus group of six men participated in two rounds of the experiential exercise, delivered by two different, male musicians in a small teaching space in an amphitheatre configuration. Each session was followed by individual interviews with each participant and musician. Sue Wilkinson argues that in comparison to 'one to one' interviews, the dynamics of a focus group can help surface ideas and reflection, eliciting memories from the individual and open up opportunities to share information with the group. (Wilkinson, 1998).

### **Focus Group**

The group sessions lasted one hour due to the professional constraints of the participants, as not only was it challenging to ask for more than an hour of their time, they also needed to be simultaneously available twice and for the individual interviews. A focus group of six participants is considered optimal as too large a group can create sub-groups that might influence and distract other group members from the experience, whereas too small a group can be challenging, with participants potentially feeling intimidated by the situation. Focus groups of six participants also generally favours a more homogenous group dynamic, making it easier to exchange with one another and for the facilitator to observe and react to any dominant behaviour that can influence the exercise and outcome (Krueger, 1988).

Having two sessions with the same group would provide data on how consistent (or not) the participant's reactions to the sessions might be, what common themes span across both sessions as well as notable differences, considering that the first session would be more unknown. The only significant planned change was to have a different musician to test whether musical style and tone would trigger a different reaction in the group. The interviews with the participants in between the sessions was not only to capture further reflections, observations and data for the research, but also to note any tweaks for the next session that could be considered.

## **Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews are commonly used in qualitative research and made sense for the research as I wanted to explore a particular theme and allow space for further reflections and ideas beyond the group sessions that might come to mind for the participant (Holland 2013). Interviews were done within a week of each session.

## **The Observer and Facilitator**

I have worked in education for over 20 years and in this particular business institute for 16 years in various roles and know the participants, some better than others. I have worked with some of the participants over the years as a peer and never as a subordinate or superior.

## **The Participants**

The six participants all work in the same business educational institute, as do I, which was essentially out of convenience for the exercise. As mentioned, the participants are all known to me, some more than others and the selection focused mainly on the participants not working closely together, i.e. in different departments and/or functions, as well as nationality. The participant's ages ranged between 30 to 45 and come from five different countries in Europe, North America, North Africa and Oceania. All speak English fluently. The participant's roles all involve management, be that of people and/or projects, working in marketing, communications, operations, IT and consulting, all based in France.

An invitation was sent out individually asking for their participation and availability for the sessions, explaining the simple research question of the thesis with regards to exploring and observing how men react when listening to a live musician and the types of conversations and themes that may surface. The information was deliberately minimal to influence expectations as little as possible for the exercise, reinforcing that there was no specific desired outcome, other than seeing where the exercise would take us. It was made clear that specific, personal information from the conversations would be treated confidentially.

## **The musicians**

Both musicians for the sessions are professional singer songwriters, from the UK. The first musician to participate was Sam Brookes, described as an alternative folk artist with music journalists drawing comparisons to Tim Buckley, due to his distinctive vocal range, capable of singing in three keys and his mastery of the guitar. He released his first album in 2011 to much acclaim and was named as a 'Breaking Act' by The Sunday Times. His second album was critiqued as one of the best albums of 2014 by The Independent. He participates in regular music programmes with CLIC Sargent, a charity that supports children and young adults under 25 years old, living with cancer. The programme looks at how to create songs and the children are invited to write their own song, making connections with their lives through music.

The second musician, Tom Bright, started releasing his songs in 2016, produced by the likes of Mick Jones from The Clash, receiving plaudits from the UK music press for his bard like style of capturing life events and turning them into intriguing vivid scenarios. He has recently written a song for an album to support the UK charity, SANE, a leading UK mental health charity set up to improve the quality of life for anyone affected by mental illness. Both musicians feature regularly on BBC Radio 6 and local radio stations.

I was able to secure both musicians through coordinating and setting up concerts with them in past. Pre-session discussions were done separately to explain the context of the research question. The only guidelines given were for the musicians to choose songs to perform that had emotional significance to them and that the sessions would open and close with a song. Participants and musicians were free to exchange. Each musician was interviewed after their respective sessions for their feedback as well as learnings and any possible changes that could be considered for the second session.

## **Experiential environment**

I was able to reserve the same teaching room at my workplace for each session, again for consistency with regards to the experience. This is a small amphitheatre, with tall windows surrounding much of the space and allowing for natural light to come in. The design is such that if sat on the front row, one feels lower than the ground outside, which means that other than sky and trees tops from the view of the windows, there are few external distractions that can be seen, such as passersby. The swivel seats are large and comfortable with high backs to support the person's head. I chose this room as I felt that it was conducive to creating a reflective space to encourage free associations, allowing for the mind to wander and as Christopher Bollas describes, 'a means of gaining access to the threads of our complex internal network, as previously unthought-of ideas find their way to consciousness through the narrated details' (Bollas, 2002). I decided to not turn the lights on as the natural, yet sombre lighting felt more relaxing.

Manmade amphitheatres date back to Ancient Greece, producing excellent acoustics due to their circular form. This was indeed the case for the room used and meant that the musician did not require amplifying their sound in anyway, removing potentially stressful factors linked to electronic sound equipment, such as sound balance between the voice and the guitar. It also added a more natural delivery to the music.

## **Delivery**

Participants were invited to sit on the semi-circular front row of seats, suggested by the bottles of water I had placed. Both sessions were held on two successive Mondays, one mid-morning and the second, mid-afternoon, due to the participant's common availability. The first session started with a reminder from me of the rules to reinforce the desire to create a safe space that could promote the sharing of any thoughts and reflections that came to mind, the length of the session and to briefly introduce ourselves to the each other. I took the group through a simple mindful breathing exercise to encourage the participants to be in the present. The musician then started performing when they felt it was a good moment to begin, with no particular cue from me. Once the song ended, it felt quite natural to have a long silence to allow for thoughts and reflections. The session ended with a different song from the musician for closure. The interviews that followed opened up the idea of having a third song for the second session. Other than this, the same format was used for both sessions.



## **Session structure**

Session (1 hour):

- Introduction to session, why, what for, how, how I will and will not facilitate. The ground rules.  
Thank Group, thank musician.
- Participants to introduce self (But not expectations of session)
- Musician does the same
- Start with breathing exercise to arrive
- Musician starts
- Music ends
- Invite participants to share anything that comes to mind (I observe/facilitate)
- Last ten minutes for feedback as a group if not done already
- End with a song for closure to the session. Thank all.

## **Data Gathering and Reporting**

Data was gathered by taking notes during both the group sessions and the interviews as I was concerned with challenges from using an audio recording device and not capturing comments between six participants, the musician and me, sat in different places in the room. I then started to foresee being distracted with whether the equipment would be reliable, having enough memory, battery and unless I had a microphone, where would I place the device? I also began to fantasize that participants would be focusing on the audio device and not the musician and themselves and potentially not feeling safe to reflect and share. This struck me as too many external factors that could jeopardise the experience and interfere with my capacity to observe fully.

The group sessions were unstructured and started with a simple, open-ended question and the individual interviews were conducted using a semi-structured, in-depth interviewing approach in order to explore the following topics:

- 1) The influence of the experiential exercise on emotions
- 2) The influence of the experiential exercise on emotional awareness
- 3) The psychodynamic approach of the experiential learning for emotional awareness
- 4) The influence of experiential learning on self-knowledge

I equally decided to keep a journal of the overall experience. A journal not only helps the observer with their self-awareness and to develop a more grounded stance as to where they are situated in the exercise, it also allows for further reflections to emerge and raise awareness of potential biases held by the observer.

## Session 1

Participants complied and sat where the bottles of water had been placed. One participant did comment during the following interview how it was interesting that everybody sat in the front row, next to each other. We then waited for the last person to arrive prior to starting the session.

I went over the ground rules of the session and invited the participants and musician to introduce themselves, but not to share their expectations of the session. All but one participant talked about their expectations, which I found interesting. The expectations shared were not too in depth and participants spoke about how they did not know what to expect, other than intrigue. Had this instruction removed a feeling of free behavior and made the participants react, by reestablishing their freedom and therefore talk about their expectations? (Brehm & Brehm 1981).

All members of the group participated willingly in the mindful breathing exercise and to my surprise, all but one kept their eyes closed as we transitioned to the musician playing, and throughout the song. Once the song ended, the participants began to open their eyes slowly and after a long pause, I asked the participants to share any observations, reflections and associations.

From the exchanges between the group and Sam Brookes, he shared that he writes songs for himself and that he perceives songwriting as a form of therapy. When creating music, he often starts with a particular emotion that he feels challenged by or stuck with and to overcome it, he will deliberately get close to it, using imagery to guide him in his creative process. Sam came across as comfortable and openly shared anything that was asked. He took a listening stance with the group, mainly responding and reflecting to the questions posed.

This information was initially collated and then arranged into the categories in the table below, by participant. It can be seen that the group gave significantly more observations than reflections and fewer associations.

## Participant's observations, reflections and associations during session 1

Participant	Observations	Reflections	Associations
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Breathing helped going deeper into music quickly</li> <li>I felt at peace</li> <li>I saw how Sam was so engaged and connected when he sang</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Kids sing easily, adults don't (allow themselves)</li> </ul>	
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It was relaxing</li> <li>When Sam sang high notes, I was transported</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Made me think of Northern Europe</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The high notes made me think of home, when I was a child</li> <li>It made me think of Nordic countries</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A nice way to start the week</li> <li>Forgot about my worries</li> <li>The squeaking ventilation was annoying me at first and disappeared as I heard the music</li> <li>I was totally engaged, a real moment as opposed to work</li> <li>Had to fight my musical baggage</li> <li>My attention jumps easily, not here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong, personal images</li> <li>I struggle with high/low voices, maybe to do with male and female connections</li> <li>There is no sharing like this after concerts</li> <li>Having the opportunity to share like this is valuable</li> <li>It is interesting how we (men) usually talk like this over a beer and usually about football and women</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Going away</li> <li>Holidays</li> <li>A flower after summer</li> <li>Notions of survival</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was in my own space</li> <li>I let go quickly</li> <li>I made a conscious effort to not listen to the lyrics</li> <li>I have just realized that I am not attracted to female voices and male voices that go high. I wonder why? When Sam went high, I disconnected and reconnected when he went low</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>At concerts, I will look around at others, whereas this was a moment for me</li> <li>I thought about my kids, who sing all the time. It is amazing how they connect to music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I imagined being in a court, enjoying the music, not the lyrics</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I concentrated on my breathing</li> <li>I felt connected</li> <li>I got taken away by my emotions and felt stressed between the breathing and the music.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wanted to show appreciation to the musician</li> </ul>	
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I picked up on key words that related to me</li> <li>I felt close to the musician</li> <li>I feel safe here and I am not embarrassed to share my emotions here</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nostalgic</li> <li>I feel rarely connected at large concerts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Images of warmth and thinking of home, so far away</li> <li>An Island</li> </ul>

## **Interviews after session 1**

A set of questions had been prepared for the interviews, but not all them needed to be asked as the responses from many of the participants covered them. I observed how the participants adopted a more analytical position during the interviews, compared to the group sessions.

### **Questions:**

- How was the experience for you?
- Were there any notable surprises from self or others?
- Did you find it easy to share with others? (More than usual)?
- Where there any emotions you experienced?
- Did anything happen after, linked to the session that was notable?
- Thoughts of the mindful breathing exercise?
- Are there questions I could have asked?

## **Summary of the interviews after session 1**

Combing over the responses from the participants (See Appendix 1), three dominant emerging categories surfaced from the interviews based on the experience, the group dynamics and reflections. A few associations were also shared.

Almost all participants appreciated not having heard the musician's songs before, as it was felt that it might influence the experience. The breathing exercise was overall well received, including from the musician, to get into 'a place'. Three participants mentioned how they wanted to ask Sam what his creative process was. There was a general feeling of frustration for not hearing more songs. One participant noted that he was the only one to not talk about expectations and wondered if he had misunderstood the instructions.

Another participant shared how the second song that Sam Brookes sang, made him think of a road trip in North Africa and how he observed the musician's visual pain as he sang and it reminded him of a very emotional song. He also mentioned how the breathing exercise did not feel natural, yet closing his eyes and breathing felt like praying.

On the experience, the majority of the participants felt relaxed by the session and some spoke about feeling connected to the group. The opportunity to exchange with a musician and the group in such a way was a unique experience and there was an appreciation in how the group gave each other the space to express themselves and to be listened to. The session felt too short and questions were raised as to whether the experience would have been the same with a different musician.

On group dynamics, participants expressed how they felt safe to openly share in a short amount of time, personal topics and that the exchanges in the group were engaging.

The main themes that emerged from the reflections focused on how the session triggered and spiked certain thoughts linked to feeling more receptive to sharing their emotions, how it accelerated being connected and engaged with the group and tapping into emotions and raising self-awareness.

Sam Brookes shared that he enjoyed the intimate experience and that emotionally he felt he was going to a familiar place as when he performs. He found it interesting to receive feedback in such a way and that it was revealing how people perceive music, how they take it apart and interpret it. It reinforced how people have their own way of experiencing moments at a same event. However, he has not experienced such sharing moments in a normal concert setting and therefore, he felt connected on a different level to the group.

Sam Brookes also spoke of the notion of conscious vulnerability in the group that felt acceptable, with the musician exposing himself through the performance and the audience responding in a way that completed a kind a circle, which cannot be done alone. He then extended the reflection to what the 'bigger' artists experience. The endorphin hit goes after the show and what then? Do bigger concerts complete such a circle, with the musician hearing how their art impacts and effects others?

## Session 2

The second session started by reminding the group of the ground rules and from the feedback following the first round of interviews, I invited the participants to do an even simpler breathing exercise by simply closing their eyes and breathing in a way that they preferred. There was one further change from the first session with the addition of a third song, mid-way.

As an introduction to the musician Tom Bright, I asked participants to give their names and describe what their relationship was with music. Some of the participants shared what instruments they play, or played, or their opinion of not being able to play an instrument, yet sharing their enjoyment of listening to music, different genres and how it accompanies them, according to what they might be doing (sport, work, washing up), or their frame of mind (mood).

Similar to the first session, participants shared more observations than reflections and fewer associations (See appendix 2). Almost all of the participants shared how Tom Bright's musical style made the lyrics more accessible, conveying rich images that sparked some profound reflections. Three participants shared very personal thoughts that made them visibly emotional. One participant became very animated and expansive about better understanding his partner's point of view on a topic that he had felt stuck on and another expressed feeling moved, close to tears as the song reminded him of his mother.

Tom Bright interacted somewhat with the group and openly talked about his sense of vulnerability. He explained that to find material for his songs, he likes to observe people and then create a story, using empathy and imagining what it is like to be in their shoes. The first song was about the life of twin brothers, gradually growing apart and their futile rivalry ending in regret as they neared the end of their lives and the second song was of a man confessing to not being well. The last song had an upbeat melody, yet the theme was about a woman in a loveless marriage, who felt disillusionment from the promises made at the start of her relationship. Tom Bright also explained how he deliberately makes his songs simple in order to tap into the emotions of the lyrics.

## Participant's observations, reflections and associations during session 2

Participant	Observations	Reflections	Associations
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I focused on the melody</li> <li>(2<sup>nd</sup> song) I listened to the lyrics</li> <li>(2<sup>nd</sup> song) I could paint the picture you sang, the emotions were even stronger</li> </ul>		
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was frustrated as I have twins and I could not get the sense of the song</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Traditionally, where I am from, we all participate in music</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(2<sup>nd</sup> song) I was thinking about my mother, speaking with her. I left home when I was a teenager. I have cried two or three times over a song and this could be another one</li> </ul>
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Because the music was simple, it made me pay more attention to the lyrics</li> <li>That (The 2<sup>nd</sup> song) was about me!</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The theme of the song made me think of something personal related to expecting children. This is something my partner has mentioned a few times and I can see her point of view now. I have never thought about it that way</li> <li>It made me think of my brother and what it would be like to have a conflict like in your song</li> <li>You can't be yourself all the time and it makes me think of social conventions, expectations Vs. reality</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I could see the religious imagery</li> <li>It made me think of a certain play along the same theme of the song</li> <li>Made me think of family. Life and death and I relate it to my family and it grabbed my attention.</li> </ul>
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I made a concerted effort to listen to the lyrics. Last week, I was in an open mindset, but where am I emotionally (today)? I am feeling tired right now and maybe too emotionally sensitive to receive</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I think the challenge is to sing something topical, yet impactful. It becomes universal. I appreciate from what you explain how I appreciate how the musician creates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I heard the story in the song. It reminded me of a famous musician I saw and he also played acoustic. Which I realise really helps hear the story</li> </ul>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Your song is yours and I take something from that</li> <li>I was curious of the stance (Of the singer)</li> <li>Do you ever write about yourself (Tom)?</li> <li>There was a kind of juxtaposition as the song was sad, yet lively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I live far away from my brothers and the song made me want to reach out to them</li> <li>The empathy is surprising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>It made me think of the TV series, 'This is us'</li> </ul>
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I was focused on you Tom. You were so engaged. There was something going on for you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>I linked the song to my brother, being so far away and the regret of not seeing him and his kids grow</li> </ul>	



## **Summary of the interviews after session 2**

Again, the three emerging categories from the interviews were about the experience, the group dynamics and reflections (See appendix 2). There were some interesting associations shared, from a participant remembering a specific song that played when his partner announced she was pregnant, another about how the music from the session triggered memories of courting women, or very personal emotions about one of the participant's brothers and their uncles who both played guitar to them when they were children.

As in the first session, the group mainly felt engaged and connected, yet more quickly than in the previous experience, some putting this down to it being more known than the second time around as well as others finding Tom Bright's music accessible. The musical style was perceived as favouring lyrical imagery and with a less complex musical arrangement, making the stories in the song stand out and resonate.

Participants expressed that there was a clear shift in how more forthcoming they were during this session and referred to what they felt were deeply emotional conversations on personal topics. Interesting reflections were shared during the second round of interviews on how the music had triggered associations and connections to self-awareness, individual's past and empathy towards the group members, the musician and beyond. Broader topics included what environmental factors can restrict and encourage more authentic and meaningful conversations, authenticity, vulnerability and how much of this is linked to men (or not).

Tom Bright conveyed that it had been an interesting and emotive experience, so much so that he spoke to his mother and partner about the experience after. He felt that it made him go into (Performing) the songs more than usual as he predicted that there would be questions after. The experience was surprising and rewarding to him as the emotional response was something he had not experienced in such a way. Tom Bright observed how the group, overall spoke about family and what they miss about that, or that they don't communicate enough, for some with regret. He said that it was enriching to do and that he was struck by how a song that he creates, can have significant meaning to others who have never heard his music before.

## Exploring emerging themes from the sessions

In order to further explore potential emerging themes from the two sessions, I applied words to best describe the comments made by the participants in the three categories: observations, reflections and associations. These words were then put into word clouds to visually emphasize trends through words appearing larger in size according to their frequency.

### Participant’s observations, reflections and associations: Descriptions

Observations	Reflections	Associations
Relaxed X 3	Self-consciousness X 2	Home X 3
Connected X 7	Places	Countries
Transported	Intimacy X 2	Travelling
Positive	Preferences	Holidays
Comforted	Comparisons X 3	Nature
Engaged	Sharing	Seasons
Conflicted	Gratitude	Survival
Introspective	Past	Grandeur
Disconnected	Frustration	Isolation
Mindfulness	Culture	Childhood
Attentive X 3	Empathy X 4	Religion
Safe	Authenticity	Art X 2
Frustrated	Distance	Family
Resistant	Regret	Existence
Emphatic		
Curious		
Reflective		

Key words to describe participant's observations (I felt...):



Key words to describing participant's reflections (on):



Participant made associations (linked to):

Seasons Travelling  
Family  
Childhood  
Religion Art Holidays  
**Home**  
Grandeur Existence Nature  
Isolation  
Survival Countries

## **Findings and Discussion**

There are four main themes that emerge from the data that are connected to how live, current music, applied in an experiential exercise can allow for emotional awareness to surface. This is conveyed through what the participants expressed during the sessions and in the interviews. These themes are; experiencing in the present, being in a transitional space, vulnerability and finally, relational attachment.

### **“I felt disconnected from everything”.**

Experiencing in the present was influenced significantly by the mindful breathing exercise, to allow for the participants to arrive into the session. Focusing on the comments made in the sessions provides further evidence on this state and is reinforced in the interviews. Participant One, explained how the breathing helped go deeper into the experience and that he felt at peace. Participant Two, felt relaxed and transported, participant Three expressed how the session was a nice way to start the week and forget about his worries, feeling totally engaged and attentive. Participant Four was able to let go quickly and get into his own space.

The notion of feeling disconnected from the outside world through this exercise provides potential links to the group feeling connected (Scheinfeld, Rochlen, And Buser.2011)

### **“I shared things that I am aware of but not thought about in such depth”.**

The sessions created a transitional space, with participants talking about how a particular song evoked images of warmth, memories of the place they grew up in, or a peaceful and beautiful island, conjuring what Christopher Bollas (1987) refers to as the ‘unthought known’. The sense of safety was equally expressed through the sharing of the group’s viewpoints, with feelings of a ‘high level of trust’. Participant Three was surprised how quickly the group spoke about their emotions so easily and wondered if this was because of who he is, or the opportunity to speak openly in a safe environment. One participant referred to the sessions as a holding environment, with the music lightening their mood, despite the weight of the music and that the experience felt cathartic, rather than ‘dark’ and ‘heavy’ and another participant, explained how the sessions created connections that triggered thoughts and memories.

**“Emotional expression is muted, removed and less present in a professional environment. It is perceived as less professional (to be emotional). Is this where we lose our identity, our authenticity”?**

The group was most forthcoming with their thoughts and emotions, especially in the second session. The majority of the group exposed themselves and through the sense of trust, shared deep and personal reflections. Participant Five shared with the group how he felt overwhelmed by his emotions and felt stressed between the breathing and the music. Participant Six openly shared that through feeling safe, he was not embarrassed to share his emotions. One particular song triggered a participant to be visibly struck by the realization of seeing the point of view of his partner for the first time and the importance of this perspective. There were many existential thoughts that were both positive and negative, yet it was apparent that the experience provided a distance to enable such thoughts to occur and be viewed from another stance, such as Participant Two, who with much sincerity, said how a song made him think of how he missed his mother and their conversations very much. Each participant observed that they had experienced certain emotions in a new way, or from a different perspective.

**“It brought us together quickly and we connected with our past and that of others. We take it for granted, but music can have that effect on you”.**

Relational attachment was apparent as several members of the group expressed how they connected with the musician, feeling close to them as they performed, which in turn triggered clinical spikes, such as why do adults develop inhibitions and no longer feel comfortable singing in the way a child does ‘in public’. It was felt that the opportunity to share in such a way was rare and of great value, with participant Three, reflecting on how sharing on this level does not occur after a concert, despite the event being similar. One participant wanted to show appreciation to the musician for what they had shared with two other participants noting how the sessions brought them together quickly, as well as connecting with their past, concluding that this is the impact that music can have. All of the participants expressed how they felt empathy for each other through the music, despite referring to something personal, yet channeled by the same song.

## **Analysis of the literature review and data**

Evidence shows that music can be used as a means of tapping into one's emotions in many ways, often linked to therapy, but not only. What was not clear was whether current or 'pop' music also had a place and if so, how and to what extent could it raise emotional awareness. As the goal was to explore how receptive men might respond emotionally to the experience, the next step would be to develop a workshop with a more developed framework and objectives. Considerations could be and not limited to, what a participant does with their findings, how could their observations be transferred to applicable actions if this were to be the goal, does this have an impact on the format of the exercise and would there be individual, group follow up sessions and so on.

The exercise was not to identify, nor address depression in the group and it was a no go area for me. I am neither qualified nor experienced to identify and treat depression. Developing an outlet that can reduce levels of stress that might contribute to depression and allow for men to have greater awareness of their emotions, was of interest to me. An essential aspect to dealing with depression is generally through therapy in order to develop a greater awareness of self. By creating connections from the subconscious to the conscious, these spikes can provide clues that can lead individuals to address, or seek support to certain emotional barriers they may experience in life. An important aspect that is specific to depression in men is the social pressure they face in not showing their vulnerability. The participants for this exercise were generally forthcoming in expressing what the exercise was triggering in them on an emotional level and I did not observe embarrassment or judgmental behaviour from the group on any level. Is this because they knew each other and were from the same company? This is possible, as is the opposite as although I knew the participants, I was not fully aware of how well they knew each other.

I observed how the group interacted in a very similar way to adventure therapy, demonstrating camaraderie, appreciating a safe and trusting space to reflect and share emotions as well as the possibility of processing them individually and as a group. Having participated in adventure therapy groups, I did wonder whether the physical element to some exercises can be one challenge too many for some. Was this musical exercise more accessible than adventure therapy? To be able to consider and suggest this, a significant number of such experiential exercises would be required.

Having read about the psychodynamic approach to group coaching was extremely helpful as I was able to observe the group dynamics through a different lens, as well as observe what was happening inside me. Not only did I feel more aware of how some of the group members were participating differently, I

was also conscious that the music, the voice and the lyrics were at times drawing me in and I could sense my attention being potentially blinkered to the experience. The approach reinforced the need to create an inclusive and safe environment with clear boundaries for the well-being of the group.

Connected to this was night vision. I found the night vision stance of great value, enabling me to remain objective and non-judgmental towards the participants and myself and identifying potential unconscious factors linked to the past and the present. As previously mentioned in the literature review, I felt that the night vision cycle could not be applied, although I would consider this for a future, more complete exercise.

Beyond acknowledging the concepts of holding and containment, I feel that I was not able to fully grasp them as my interpretation was influenced by the importance of establishing a safe transitional space in order to allow for emotions to surface.

The honest and meaningful reflections and conversations that were had in the exercises and shared in the interviews conveyed the participant's (and musician's) capacity for emotional intelligence that was encouraged and solicited by the musician's delivering their songs in a raw and exclusive way. The notion of exposing themselves was taken a step further as the participants were able to ask any questions to the musicians, who gave very honest answers and reflections that included how they find their creative inspiration and authenticity. This equally encouraged the participants to open up and be vulnerable, connecting not only with themselves, but each other, without there being any stigma attached to it. The subject of emotional intelligence and vulnerability could be addressed in a more conscious way, were this to be a more tailored experiential exercise on the value of raising emotional awareness.

The mindfulness exercise was a very impactful means of starting the sessions. Having practiced mindfulness for four years gave rise to a new challenge for me, as I have only once delivered a mindfulness exercise to a group. Practicing mindfulness is very personal and intimate for me and sharing this with others forces me to expose myself, a good exercise in itself. The initial feedback following the first rounds of interviews gave me confidence that it was a good choice as it enabled the group to be in the same place and present. Further feedback from one participant to simplify the exercise was valuable as not only did it take pressure off me, it made it more accessible to practice and reduce the chances of not being able to do it 'well', or feel excluded from the group.



## **Summary of the findings and discussion**

The results from the data gathering support the hypothesis that such an intervention provided a safe space for the male participants to share personal observations, reflections and emotions in a very short amount of time. The literature review provided valuable information, frameworks, concepts and data in order to deliver the intervention. It also served as a means of benchmarking whether ‘current’ or ‘pop’ music, delivered live, can be developed and applied in a psycho-dynamic way, as an experiential exercise. Although the findings are tentative and subject to further amendment, they reflect how the exercises provided an alternative to adventure therapy, as it also provided a space to quickly engage and for the participants to openly share and process their emotions.

As the facilitator, I expected that I would need to intervene more during the exercises and apprehended potential issues from the group and individuals, such as unresponsiveness, judgmental comments, defensive behaviour, dominant participants and so on. The way in which the group showed little to no resistance to the exercises and gave each other space to express themselves as well as acknowledging and contributing to what each participant was saying, demonstrated a level of respect and care that I had not accounted for. Another surprise I experienced was the sense of gratitude each participant conveyed, including the musicians.

## **Limitations**

The shortcomings echo that this is a tentative study, yet hopefully it offers seeds to develop the research further. My role as the facilitator, researcher and observer, known to the participants, invariably had an influence on the experience, even though I tried to maintain a certain distance from the group. It must also be taken into consideration that some of the participants know each other personally, as well as being colleagues and the exercises occurred at their workplace. Only using one group set, one gender and from the same company during a limited amount of time also limits the findings.

I am also lucid to the fact that my passion for live music could influence my facilitation style, interviewing and analysis of the data and how it was interpreted.

## **Future Research**

Future research ideas and recommendations are:

- More focus groups to provide more data to analyse
- Participants who are unknown to each other and to the facilitator, coming from different industries, roles and responsibilities and ages
- A female musician performing to a male group
- Female groups
- Mixed gender groups
- Extend the exercise duration
- Delivery in a neutral environment (to the participants)
- Targeted interview questions, such as what could participants do with the information they observe from the experience
- Compare the same group's reactions and responses to recorded music and live music

## Conclusion

The action research project was to explore what happens when modern day, live music is played to a group of men and whether it raises their emotional awareness and if so, how.

By identifying and acknowledging connections between how men are pressured by societal expectations to not show signs of weakness and vulnerability, and therefore burying these emotions, gives rise to the question of how can men find a way to identify and process their emotions. The goal of the thesis was not to tackle head on depression in men, but to provide a possible outlet to express and process emotions in a more constructive and healthier way.

The group's interaction with each other and the musician was fascinating and rewarding to observe and confirmed that the exercise instilled a safe, non-judgmental space. Beyond setting the scene and inviting the group to be in the present through the mindfulness exercise, the atmosphere was triggered very much by the musician delivering their music in an authentic and genuine way, exposing themselves and engaging the participants to listen not only to the artist, but to what was going on within.

The rapidity in which the group connected was remarkable, as in the short time it took for the participants to sit, breathe mindfully and then listen to the first song, they then launched into reflections, associations and observations. What felt like the singularity that each participant brought to the room as they began the exercise became a sense of universality through the live music being performed.

With further research, experimentation of format and group dynamics, I feel that an experiential exercise can be designed to develop findings and actions for participants and offer an alternative to adventure group therapy that can be impactful in facilitating emotional awareness for all.

## Appendix 1

### Participant interviews after session 1

#### Summary of responses from the participants

Experience	Group Dynamics	Reflections
Different to any workshop I have done before	Stereotypically, men don't open up so easily and after a four minute song, we spent 45 minutes talking about personal things, feelings and anecdotes	I think it helped me be more receptive. Would it have been the same with a different musician?
The music created a relaxing environment	I felt safe and hearing other people's views was interesting	Two days after, I thought how being creative gets less acceptable and encouraged, the older you get, unless it is part of your craft. For a child to sing, or draw is fine
Making us feel comfortable before was important	The reactions felt down to earth, no one was being pompous or showing off	It feels stifling that we can't express our emotions
I have never done a breathing exercise in a group before and at first it distracted me but as the music played, it got me into a trance	The level of trust felt high, there was no need for filters and I could express myself freely	It brought us together quickly and we connected with our past and that of others. We take it for granted, but music can have that effect on you
It showed me how music can accelerate emotions and bring people together. I had never considered this before and took it for granted	I have since spoken to participants 1 and 6, making pleasant connections out of a work context and ended up introducing new music to each other. We also talked about the links between music and feelings	Feeling busy now made me realise how relaxing it was
It was a quality moment	I was surprised how quickly the group spoke about their emotions so easily. Was this because of who I am, or the opportunity to speak openly in a safe environment?	It was strange to me as this is not my cultural music, but I would hear such music from watching the foreign TV as a kid
A nice break after a busy weekend	Very different mix of participants	I choose the style of music for the type of task I need to do
Breathing the way we did, did not feel natural, but closing my eyes and breathing felt like praying	The group felt like a community	It made me think about what kind of music was important to me as a child
I was surprised how well Sam sang and I did not think it was possible to sing like that live	I was surprised how some of the participants went so deeply in their thoughts	A rhythm, regardless of its roots, captures me

The song was an outlet for emotions	Listening to the other participants, I wanted to build on what they were saying and held myself back	Music is in all of us, like babies dancing in our bellies
I was able to balance listening to others and to myself	I know most of the people in the group and it felt like a stronger connection was made	I started to make links with emotions and music
Closure with an ending song was a nice way to end	I don't mix with men much and it felt good to be exchanging with a group of men	Maybe we are more open to this kind of exercise because of where we work, what if this was delivered to bankers?
I appreciated seeing a musician in a different context (Being able to share)	Introducing ourselves distracted me, I wish I had said more about my personal connection with music, that I played in a band for some years. Why didn't I?	I feel that there is a universal link between music and focusing on self
I watched it all and the others listening with their eyes closed		Only having men, taking openly to Sam, must have been new to him
Even more music would have been nice		It was interesting to learn that Sam writes songs for himself. When I have written songs, it was for other people, not me. It sounds like a kind of therapy (The way he explained it), which is interesting and something I had not thought of in this way before. It makes sense
I felt disconnected from everything, peaceful and just the music		I shared things that I am aware of but not thought about in such depth
I was initially too focused on the breathing, but it was a nice way to connect with the music		I wonder about (voice) pitch and how different ones can turn me off listening. Sam had a perfect voice and I realise that I only connect with imperfect voices
Everyone was very respectful, nobody talking over others. People gave each other room, on one dominated		I realise that we never hear our own voices and everyone is heard differently. You never hear what others hear
I do mindful breathing before going to bed and not the way we used it, but it definitely helped me get into the place. I found it rewarding it stimulated the process		The best moments in live music is when we are being told a story by the musician, what is the song about, what is the red thread?
I wonder if this would have been different with a different genre or style?		I feel people relate to music in two ways; rhythm or lyrics. I usually listen to the rhythm, but during the session, I

		listened to the lyrics, not like my wife. We access music differently
The minor chords grabbed my attention, it felt very dark and I don't know why		I listen to music a lot and the emotional connection I have with live music very different. I have never considered this before. The small concerts I have been to are always the best
I admired the skill of the musician		I like to compare bands and singers I listen to and it then takes me to a specific place or event in the past
		I like to see musician's emotions and if you are not looking at them and that aspect, why be there?
		There aren't many mediums that can spark emotions like music and I liken it to something invigorating, like smell, or taste
		Will there be a difference with a different musician. Would we react differently if it was a female musician?
		I was surprised how well Sam sang and I did not think it was possible to sing like that live
		The song was an outlet for emotions
		I was able to balance listening to others and to myself
		Closure with an ending song was a nice way to end

## Experience

<b>The experience made me feel</b>	
The music created a relaxing environment	<b>Relaxed</b>
Making us feel comfortable before was important	<b>Relaxed</b>
I have never done a breathing exercise in a group before and at first it distracted me but as the music played, it got me into a trance	<b>Relaxed</b>
It showed me how music can accelerate emotions and bring people together. I had never considered this before and took it for granted	<b>Connected</b>
It was a quality moment	<b>Relaxed</b>
A nice break after a busy weekend	<b>Relaxed</b>
I felt disconnected from everything, peaceful and just the music	<b>Relaxed</b>
I was initially too focused on the breathing, but it was a nice way to connect with the music	<b>Connected</b>
I do mindful breathing before going to bed and not the way we used it, but it definitely helped me get into the place. I found it rewarding it stimulated the process	<b>Relaxed</b>

<b>Experience</b>
Different to any workshop I have done before
I appreciated seeing a musician in a different context (Being able to share)
I watched it all and the others listening with their eyes closed
Even more music would have been nice
Everyone was very respectful, nobody talking over others. People gave each other room, no one dominated
I wonder if this would have been different with a different genre or style?
The minor chords grabbed my attention, it felt very dark and I don't know why
I admired the skill of the musician
Introducing ourselves distracted me; I wish I had said more about my personal connection with music that I played in a band for some years. Why didn't I?

## Group Dynamics

Group Dynamics	Summary
Stereotypically, men don't open up so easily and after a four minute song, we spent 45 minutes talking about personal things, feelings and anecdotes	Accelerated sharing personal topics
I felt safe and hearing other people's views was interesting	Safe and engaging
The reactions felt down to earth, no one was being pompous or showing off	Pragmatic, no nonsense
The level of trust felt high, there was no need for filters and I could express myself freely	Trusting and safe
I have since spoken to participants 1 and 6, making pleasant connections out of a work context and ended up introducing new music to each other. We also talked about the links between music and feelings	Sharing, built bonds
I was surprised how quickly the group spoke about their emotions so easily. Was this because of who I am, or the opportunity to speak openly in a safe environment?	Safe. Accelerated sharing personal topics
Very different mix of participants	Diversity
The group felt like a community	Safe
I was surprised how some of the participants went so deeply in their thoughts	Accelerated sharing personal topics
Listening to the other participants, I wanted to build on what they were saying and held myself back	Engaging
I know most of the people in the group and it felt like a stronger connection was made	Built bonds
I don't mix with men much and it felt good to be exchanging with a group of men	Engaging



<b>Reflections</b>	<b>On...</b>
I think it helped me be more receptive. Would it have been the same with a different musician?	Triggers
Two days after, I thought how being creative gets less acceptable and encouraged, the older you get, unless it is part of your craft. For a child to sing, or draw is fine	Inhibitions
It feels stifling that we can't express our emotions	Inhibitions
It brought us together quickly and we connected with our past and that of others. We take it for granted, but music can have that effect on you	Triggers, spikes
Feeling busy now made me realise how relaxing it was	Daily life 'traffic'
It was strange to me as this is not my cultural music, but I would hear such music from watching the foreign TV as a kid	The past
I choose the style of music for the type of task I need to do	Drivers
It made me think about what kind of music was important to me as a child	The past
A rhythm, regardless of its roots, captures me	Triggers
Music is in all of us, like babies dancing in our bellies	
I started to make links with emotions and music	Spikes
Maybe we are more open to this kind of exercise because of where we work, what if this was delivered to bankers?	
I feel that there is a universal link between music and focusing on self	Spikes
Only having men, taking openly to Sam, must have been new to him	Empathy
It was interesting to learn that Sam writes songs for himself. When I have written songs, it was for other people, not me. It sounds like a kind of therapy (The way he explained it), which is interesting and something I had not thought of in this way before. It makes sense	Empathy
I shared things that I am aware of but not thought about in such depth	Exposing
I wonder about (voice) pitch and how different ones can turn me off listening. Sam had a perfect voice and I realise that I only connect with imperfect voices	Awareness
I realise that we never hear our own voices and everyone is heard differently. You never hear what others hear	Empathy
The best moments in live music is when we are being told a story by the musician, what is the song about, what is the red thread?	Sense making
I feel people relate to music in two ways; rhythm or lyrics. I usually listen to the rhythm, but during the session, I listened to the lyrics, not like my wife. We access music differently	Empathy and sense making
I listen to music a lot and the emotional connection I have with live music is very different. I have never considered this before. The small concerts I have been to are always the best	Spikes
I like to compare bands and singers I listen to and it then takes me to a specific place or event in the past	Reflection
I like to see musician's emotions and if you are not looking at them and that aspect, why be there?	Presence
There aren't many mediums that can spark emotions like music and I liken it to something invigorating, like smell, or taste	Triggers, spikes
Will there be a difference with a different musician. Would we react differently if it was a female musician?	Triggers, spikes, curiosity

I was surprised how well Sam sang and I did not think it was possible to sing like that live	Observation
The song was an outlet for emotions	Triggers, spikes
I was able to balance listening to others and to myself	Presence
Closure with an ending song was a nice way to end	Observation

## Appendix 2

### Participant interviews after session 2

#### Summary of responses from the participants

Experience	Group Dynamics	Reflections
I felt Tom interacted more, he spoke more and I got a greater sense of his creative process and the links to emotions	The group shared much deeper stuff this time around and the songs felt less polished	Sam's session was more intense as it was the first time and Tom's was less unknown (As an experience)
I could relate to Tom's stories, they were down to earth and accessible	It is surprising how people can have emotional conversations after listening to a song for four minutes and I wondered why I was not getting as emotional as the others	
Was doing the session in the afternoon a good idea? I felt that the Monday morning was better	Music is an emotional thing and Participant 3 looked surprised with what he had to share	
The time flew by and it could have gone on for much longer	The depth of the discussions in the second session was surprising	Specific tracks trigger emotions. I can remember when my partner announced she was pregnant and song was playing that I will never forget. I realise this and photography can do the same (with my emotions)
When the music stopped, it gave me a desire to respond immediately. It is refreshing and different as an experience. It has encouraged me to approach sensitive topics with more emotional awareness, 'how does a situation make me feel'?	It has triggered other reflections about how other people feel about the same situation and it makes me wonder what makes people tick	
I was more sensitive with the second session. The style suited me and brought me back to my youth. I jumped into the second song!	I wonder what triggered Participant 3's deep reflection	The first song brought back memories of courting women. The second song, there were very personal emotions
Seeing a live performance is a lot more moving than on TV, it is a lot more engaging on an emotional level	I was struck by Participant 2's response. Very emotional and talking about your mother with a group a men in such a short amount of time	Tom was really into what he played. This application was moving and made me think of authenticity

		I've not seen many live acts so close and this experience changed my impression of a musician. They are normal people like us
I appreciated the environment of trust that developed between the two sessions	The second session was a known experience to me and we all almost, sat in our same seats as last time	Pop music is not roots, but it is accessible
		It looks like it is not easy to perform alone, you are exposing yourself
I think that I am at a level (of awareness) to be able to talk about this stuff and I am willing to let go there. Was it due to the environment (the session) that make people open up, or where I am?		
The session was more interactive with Tom, he spoke more and we went more in discussions about the creative side. Could we have listened to the song the first time in a stripped down, raw version, talk, exchange and then hear the song again?		Was the group's awareness linked to us all being essentially expatriates and we therefore face anxieties, such as relocation to a new country? Maybe this makes it easier for certain people to open up
It is not usual to be able to exchange with a musician in such a way and it made me want to be more attentive		The content of the song was emotional and triggered thoughts and memories. Did it create connections? Yes, it did
There was a realization of empathy. Was it due to us, was it the music, or the second session? I think it was an ensemble		Emotional expression is muted, removed or and less present in a professional environment. It is perceived as less professional (to be emotional). Is this where we lose our identity, our authenticity?
Rather than making our mood heavy, such as was the music, we left feeling lighter. Music can feel cathartic, we didn't leave feeling 'dark		Do 'too' emotional people not get promoted? What about the 'robots' (People who show little emotions), do they get promoted and then struggle with having to be 'human' suddenly in their senior position?
I felt connected to Tom's music emotionally		There is value to have space to talk about specific, non-work related topics, life topics
Very powerful imagery through the story telling		Work takes a lot of time (energy) with few resources and that falls regularly on the employee's shoulders. This (The session) might be a healthy way of coping with these pressures and to make

		certain connections, discussing our emotions
Very different to the last session, I enjoyed it less than the first session. The music didn't resonate as much. It felt minimalist, compared to Sam		Some of the topics we discussed do not feel acceptable to raise at work
I missed how we did the first mindful breathing exercise and I felt that the music came in earlier this time		I think musician's rarely get direct feedback in such a way
I felt that the other participants were saying what I was thinking and what I was saying sometimes. Were they influencing me, or was I was I influencing them? People articulated things I was feeling. Is that synchronicity? I think that is the difference with live music, you experience it differently with other people around you		Men usually get together through sports. Is there an emotional component that is deeper? Sports can be bonding and men do express themselves through sport, but in a certain way, not directly
		I was trying to think what Tom wrote what he wrote and that there was something going on emotionally for him. There was a raw emotion there
		The benefit for us was to have access to a musician in such a way
		I shared with my wife how surprised I was how both musicians talked about where I am from in such a way, like they gravitated to my nationality
		I always make connections to one artist and another one they make me think of

## Experience

<b>The experience made me feel</b>	
I felt Tom interacted more, he spoke more and I got a greater sense of his creative process and the links to emotions	<b>Engaged</b>
I could relate to Tom's stories, they were down to earth and accessible	<b>Connected</b>
The time flew by and it could have gone on for much longer	<b>Engaged</b>
I was more sensitive with the second session. The style suited me and brought me back to my youth. I jumped into the second song!	<b>Engaged</b>
Seeing a live performance is a lot more moving than on TV, it is a lot more engaging on an emotional level	<b>Engaged</b>
I appreciated the environment of trust that developed between the two session	<b>Safe</b>
The session was more interactive with Tom, he spoke more and we went more in discussions about the creative side. Could we have listened to the song the first time in a stripped down, raw version, talk, exchange and then hear the song again?	<b>Engaged</b>
There was a realization of empathy. Was it due to us, was it the music, or the second session? I think it was an ensemble	<b>Emphatic</b>
Rather than making our mood heavy, such as was the music, we left feeling lighter. Music can feel cathartic, we didn't leave feeling 'dark	<b>Lighter/Relieved(?)</b>
I felt connected to Tom's music emotionally	<b>Connected</b>
Very different to the last session, I enjoyed it less than the first session. The music didn't resonate as much. It felt minimalist, compared to Sam	<b>Disconnected</b>
I missed how we did the first mindful breathing exercise and I felt that the music came in earlier this time	<b>Frustrated</b>
I felt that the other participants were saying what I was thinking and what I was saying sometimes. Were they influencing me, or was I was I influencing them? People articulated things I was feeling. Is that synchronicity? I think that is the difference with live music, you experience it differently with other people around you	<b>Connected</b>

## The group felt mainly engaged and connected

<b>Experience</b>
Was doing the session in the afternoon a good idea? I felt that the Monday morning was better
When the music stopped, it gave me a desire to respond immediately. It is refreshing and different as an experience. It has encouraged me to approach sensitive topics with more emotional awareness, 'how does a situation make me feel'?
I think that I am at a level (of awareness) to be able to talk about this stuff and I am willing to let go there. Was it due to the environment (the session) that make people open up, or where I am?
It is not usual to be able to exchange with a musician in such a way and it made me want to be more attentive
Very powerful imagery through the story telling

## Group Dynamics

<b>Group Dynamics</b>	<b>Summary</b>
The group shared much deeper stuff this time around and the songs felt less polished	Sharing personal topics
It is surprising how people can have emotional conversations after listening to a song for four minutes and I wondered why I was not getting as emotional as the others	Engaging and disengaging
The depth of the discussions in the second session was surprising	Sharing personal topics
It has triggered other reflections about how other people feel about the same situation and it makes me wonder what makes people tick	Curiosity and Empathy
I wonder what triggered Participant 3's deep reflection	Sharing
I was struck by Participant 2's response. Very emotional and talking about your mother with a group a men in such a short amount of time	Safe and sharing personal topics
The second session was a known experience to me and we all almost, sat in our same seats as last time	Observant
I think that I am at a level (of awareness) to be able to talk about this stuff and I am willing to let go there. Was it due to the environment (the session) that make people open up, or where I am?	Safe and stance
There was a realization of empathy. Was it due to us, was it the music, or the second session? I think it was an ensemble	Familiarity and sharing personal topics
I felt that the other participants were saying what I was thinking and what I was saying sometimes. Were they influencing me, or was I was I influencing them? People articulated things I was feeling. Is that synchronicity? I think that is the difference with live music, you experience it differently with other people around you	Engaging, feeling connected

<b>Reflections</b>	<b>On...</b>
Sam's session was more intense as it was the first time and Tom's was less unknown (As an experience)	Expectations
It is surprising how people can have emotional conversations after listening to a song for four minutes and I wondered why I was not getting as emotional as the others	Awareness of others and self
Music is an emotional thing and Participant 3 looked surprised with what he had to share	Emotions
Specific (musical) tracks trigger emotions. I can remember when my partner announced she was pregnant and song was playing that I will never forget. I realise this and photography can do the same (with my emotions)	Triggers, spikes
It has triggered other reflections about how other people feel about the same situation and it makes me wonder what makes people tick	Awareness of others and self
The first song brought back memories of courting women. The second song, there were very personal emotions	Associations and triggers
Tom was really into what he played. This application was moving and made me think of authenticity. I've not seen mane live acts so close and this experience changed my impression of a musician. They are normal people like us	Authenticity and empathy
Pop music is not roots, but it is accessible	Triggers
It looks like it is not easy to perform alone, you are exposing yourself	Vulnerability

I think that I am at a level (of awareness) to be able to talk about this stuff and I am willing to let go there. Was it due to the environment (the session) that make people open up, or where I am?	Spikes
Was the group's awareness linked to us all being essentially expatriates and we therefore face anxieties, such as relocation to a new country? Maybe this makes it easier for certain people to open up	Group dynamics
The content of the song was emotional and triggered thoughts and memories. Did it create connections? Yes, it did	Triggers and spikes
Emotional expression is muted, removed or and less present in a professional environment. It is perceived as less professional (to be emotional). Is this where we lose our identity, our authenticity?	Environment and identity
Do 'too' emotional people not get promoted? What about the 'robots' (People who show little emotions), do they get promoted and then struggle with having to be 'human' suddenly in their senior position?	Behaviour at work
There is value to having space to talk about specific, non-work related topics, life topics	Space to reflect
Work takes a lot of time (energy) with few resources and that falls regularly on the employee's shoulders. This (The session) might be a healthy way of coping with these pressures and to make certain connections, discussing our emotions	Possible solutions to causes of stress
Some of the topics we discussed do not feel acceptable to raise at work	Environment and 'hot' topics
I think musician's rarely get direct feedback in such a way	Empathy
Men usually get together through sports. Is there an emotional component that is deeper? Sports can be bonding and men do express themselves through sport, but in a certain way, not directly	How men communicate
I was trying to think what Tom wrote what he wrote and that there was something going on emotionally for him. There was a raw emotion there	Empathy
The benefit for us was to have access to a musician in such a way	Experience
I shared with my wife how surprised I was how both musicians talked about where I am from in such a way, like they gravitated to my nationality	Connections
I always make connections to one artist and another one they make me think of	Associations

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## **Thanks**

My sincere gratitude to all for their support, feedback, encouragement, generosity (and tolerance):

My wife Cathy, our kids, Sam Brookes, Tom Bright, Participant One, Two, Three, Four, Five and Six (You know who you are)! Anthony Holland Parkin, Anis Nasr, Liz Florent Treacy, Erik van de Loo and Roger Lehman.