University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Connecting in Quarantine: Music Playlists and Dialogue about
Covid-19 Lockdown Experiences in Mexico City and Glasgow

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
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October 2024

Abstract

This research focuses on the role of music playlists during the COVID-19 lockdown in Mexico City and Glasgow, with particular attention to the significance of playlists as a conduit of expression, reflection and connection. Pre-pandemic literature outlines how playlists can be used to connect individuals through shared experiences and helping organise their memories and emotions. The study is guided by the following research questions: how did participants in Mexico City—and I, in Glasgow—create playlists specifically for the research study to reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown? What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow? How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?

The study used a mixed-methods approach, combining thematic analysis of narrative interviews and autoethnography. I conducted 25 in-depth online interviews with participants in Mexico City, who created individual playlists as a music elicitation technique. In these interviews participants shared their lockdown experiences and reflected on the significance of their playlists. The dialogue elicited through the reflection on the playlists was integral to understanding the way we processed our lockdown experience. The analysis of these interviews, combined with insights from my own playlist and autoethnographic reflections on my lockdown in Glasgow generated ten key moments from the pandemic, discussed in the Findings chapter, including Loss, Perseverance, and Internal Changes.

Further data analyses and a review of post-pandemic literature generated four broad Key Findings, outlined in the Discussion chapter. Key Findings shed light on the process of playlist creation, the transformative power of sharing music, bearing witness to the lockdown experience, and playlists as maps of emotional spaces.

The autoethnographic perspective, provided additional tools to approach and analyse my data and with insights of the intersection between my experience and participants' stories amid personal hardships, including bereavement. The study contributes original theoretical perspectives on playlists, emphasising their role as scaffolding structures and curio cabinets for self-narrative and emotional memories. By offering a collective perspective of the lockdown, this study identifies landmarks of collective experiences through playlists, enriching our understanding of emotional geographies during the pandemic. The research also provides a particular view of the intersection between personal and collective experiences, enriching the knowledge about the role of playlists in navigating crisis and uncertainty. In the closing chapter implications for research and practice are considered.

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Acknowledgments

First of all, I want to thank my participants. There is no way this research could have been done without you. You are the soul of this study. I am honoured and thankful for your openness and willingness to share your stories and songs with me.

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisors, Oscar Odena and Andrew Green, for their support and much-appreciated advice throughout my dissertation.

Thank you to every single person who contributed in any form, enabling me to stay and finish this dissertation when I was broken in more than one way. You mended me, and you will always have my heart.

Aunque sé bien que ya no podrán leerlo, lo escribo aquí para dejarlo documentado en algún lugar, además de mi corazón: Dedico esta tesis a mi papá, Francisco Javier, quien me amó y creyó en mí incondicionalmente y por lo mismo me hizo sentir que podía lograr lo que me propusiera. Te extraño tanto, papi. Pero lo logramos. Y a mi mamá, Ana Lilia, que me enseñó a ser siempre honesta conmigo misma y a "no sacarle" a nada ni nadie. *Yo te llevo dentro, hasta la raíz*, mami. Tu amor me cargó hasta aquí.

Gracias a Josean, por el apoyo y el amor de tantas formas, siempre. Eres el mejor hermano mayor que alguien pudiera pedir. Gracias a Javier, por ser mi mejor amigo y confidente. Tu apoyo y amor me trajeron de vuelta a la vida. Eres el mejor hermanito que alguien pudiera pedir.

Gracias a Mariana y a Greta, por volverse mi hogar en Glasgow y por sostenerme siempre, siempre. Estaré por siempre agradecida de su existencia.

Thanks to Erika for reminding me that we do not have to go through hardship alone and that friendship is always the best kind of love. And on that note, to the rest of the "Live, Laugh, Love" gang: Marvin, thank you for the big doses of support and sarcasm you bring to my life. And Paul, thanks for sharing your pasta and your home with me. I am convinced my mom sent you.

Thanks, Flannery, my chosen family and friend, for your constant support and love, especially during the difficult days. I am glad we held each other's hands while going through the dark forest. I am glad we both made it through.

Gracias a Etza y Tracey, por toda la ternura, la amistas y las risas. Su existencia me hace creer en un mundo mejor, tan amable, valiente y solidario como ustedes. Etza, te quiero siempre.

Gracias a Karo, por las risas, las porras y la música. Creo en el destino y la buena suerte porque existes tú. Y a Ely, gracias por acompañarme tan cerquita desde lejos. Gracias por enraízarme y recordarme quién soy con tu amor.

Finally thank you to Lauren, who took my hand the moment I felt I was about to drown and pulled me out of the river, reminding me of our sacredness and the beauty of our resilience connected in tenderness and joy.

Thank you to everyone in this life and other realms who protected me and walked beside me during all this time. Les amo y les honro. And to everyone who has ever loved me or loves me still: rest assured, I am still alive and content because of your kindness and love. I love you more.

Se acabó. Se terminó.

Author's declaration

I declare that, except where explicit reference is made to the contribution of others, that this dissertation is the result of my own work and has not been submitted for any other degree at the University of Glasgow or any other institution.

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Author's declaration

Chapter 4 is a fully revised and extended version of the paper *"Playlists, connection, and Covid. Making sense of lockdown and loss with songs in Mexico City and Glasgow"*. First presented at the Dumfries Campus Solway Series in 2022, the paper was subsequently published in January 2023 in the edited volume *Music and Social Inclusion: International Research and Practice in Complex Settings* (Odena, 2023, pp. 69-83).

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction of chapter

This research proposes the study of playlists as social tools to understand their role in helping individuals express and regulate themselves, foster a sense of connection and process different experiences. The study focuses on the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown, studying how playlists can narrate challenging experiences and facilitate emotional and social connection during moments of crisis.

A playlist combines music listening and storytelling (Fenby-Hulse, 2017) and has the potential to create and enhance connections with others and contribute to the creation of our identity. Playlists are more than just collections of songs; they can help us reflect on periods of our lives that deal with heartbreak and grief. They can be a resource as "a reality check, catalyst, support, counterpoint, or prompt for meditation" (Bowman, 2020). They can be a tool to navigate emotions and curated narratives people create to make sense of an experience. In this study, playlists allowed participants to reflect on their experience of the lockdown pandemic, and when shared with me, the playlists created an opportunity to talk about what was occurring during lockdown, how we were coping, and the connection this sharing of songs and experiences created between the participants (all residents of Mexico City) and me. Understanding the relevance of playlists as tools for creating and expressing personal narratives contributes to understanding how Mexico City's rich musical culture connects and enriches these narratives.

Playlists technically defined as sequences of digitally encoded songs that are "represented symbolically on a digital device in list form" (Rochow, 2010, p.10), share similarities with the structure of mixtapes regarding content and significance. Both playlists and mixtapes are based on some curatorial principles for organising songs –and sometimes also sounds– around a theme or mood. One of the main goals of a playlist is the aim to tell a story. But what if the story that a playlist tells is not about a mood or a theme but rather an experience? Specifically, a challenging experience, such as the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdown.

This research studies how playlists serve as tools for emotional expression, personal narrative, and social connection. It addresses a gap in the existing literature by exploring the role of the playlist in narrating personal and collective experiences during challenging times. Furthermore, this research focuses on the dialogue that playlists elicit, exploring how sharing playlists can foster conversations, reflections, and a deeper understanding of shared experiences.

Existing literature in Cultural Studies, Musicology, and even Medicine has explored playlists concerning identity, affect regulation or therapeutic purposes. However, there is still a gap in understanding their ability as tools for narrating stories during challenging experiences and collective moments of crisis. Studies exist on the use of songs or playlists linked to autobiographical experiences (Istvandity, 2015, 2019) and collective memories (van Djick, 2006) and their role in expressing identity (Rochow, 2010). While these studies offer valuable insights into the different ways music can benefit us, a gap remains on understanding how playlists can function as documents in times of crisis and serve as tools for connection and self-reflection.

Chapter 1 is structured to provide a comprehensive foundation for the thesis. I begin by exploring the Evolution of Research Focus, where I explain how Covid-19 shaped the direction and scope of the study (1.2). Then I follow with Research Motivation, exploring the reasons behind this research (1.3), following with the Scholarly Contribution of the Study (1.4) giving a summarised preview of the main scholarly contributions of the thesis. Finally, the Structure of the Thesis is summarised, providing an overview of the subsequent chapters (1.5)

1.2 Evolution of Research Focus Due to COVID-19

Initially, my research aimed to explore the impact of collective playlists on community identity within Mexico City's neighbourhoods or *barrios*. The focus was on how playlists could foster connections among residents in public spaces like parks and plazas, and how the exercise of creating said playlists could foster connections within these areas and cultivating a shared sense of belonging. The research centred the interest around how playlists could be

created and curated collectively to enhance community, create bonds around people who regularly use public spaces, and contribute to regeneration and thriving.

However, as I was preparing for fieldwork in Mexico City during my second year of the PhD program, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted my plans. International travel restrictions and global health measurements forced me to reassess my research design and pivot quickly. As a result, the research design and focus had to undergo a quick and profound transformation. The original plan, which was dependent on in-person interaction and public spaces, was no longer viable. Therefore, the project needed to evolve to adapt to these new, unprecedented conditions.

The decision to shift the research focus was driven by several factors: the practical limitations imposed by travel and social distancing measures, ethical considerations surrounding participant safety, and the need to account for the new realities of social interaction during the pandemic. Given the impossibility of conducting fieldwork in public spaces and the lack of opportunities for collective playlist creation, I pivoted the focus from collective playlists created in public spaces to individual playlists created within the context of the COVID-19 lockdown.

This new focus emerged from the desire to understand how individuals used music to cope with the isolation and emotional turbulence of lockdown. Instead of exploring how playlists could shape community identity in public spaces, I sought to investigate how individual playlists functioned as tools for storytelling and emotional navigation during a time of crisis. Participants were invited to create playlists reflecting their lockdown experiences, which served as a basis for in-depth narrative interviews (as discussed in Chapter 3, section 3.4.1). These interviews provided insight into how participants used music to navigate their emotions, maintain connections with others, and make sense of their experiences during the pandemic.

Moreover, this shift also led to a change in my methodological approach. As I listened to the participants' stories and playlists, I found myself deeply

connected to their experiences, which mirrored my emotional struggles during the lockdown. The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on my life and in my journey, and it led to a shift in my research methodology and analysis approach. This realisation led me to incorporate autoethnography into my research, allowing me to reflect on how my personal experiences connected with those of my participants. The autoethnographic approach, further elaborated in Chapter 3 and integrated into the findings discussed in Chapter 4, provided a deeper, more personal layer of analysis. Themes such as grief and perseverance emerged through the research process that allow me to understand from a unique perspective the way we use music and playlists to process and tell our stories.

The evolution of this project from its original design was a necessary response to the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The new research direction enabled me to explore the role of music in times of crisis, deepening my understanding of how people use music to cope with and articulate their experiences in periods of uncertainty and the discoveries and dialogues that emerged when the participants shared their stories and playlists with me. Although the pivot was challenging at the time, it led to a richer, more nuanced study. And ultimately, a better understanding of the role of music during crisis.

1.3 A brief overview on relevant research on playlists across fields

Interesting and relevant studies about musical playlists have been undertaken across diverse disciplines, such as Psychology (Krause, A. E., & North, A. C., 2016)., Media Studies (e.g., Dhaenens & Burgess, 2018; Prey, 2020; Bonini, T., & Gandini, A. (2019). Siles et al., 2019) and Cultural Studies (Lüders, M., 2021). Some key ideas emerging from the literature are outlined in this section, including how playlists can be a tool for coping with traumatic experiences and how they can help improve the well-being of people with dementia.

Playlists are proving beneficial in the realm of dementia care and well-being. Organisations like "Playlist for Life" aim to improve the quality of life for people with dementia through music playlists (Playlist for Life, 2015). A more in-depth inquiry of this topic is developed in Chapter 2, Literature Review.

Beyond their therapeutic applications, playlists can also be tools for storytelling and musical narrative. Recent literature explores the connection between songs and coping with memories and traumatic situations. Daughtry's research studies how playlists created by US soldiers during the Iraq War became instruments for coping with traumatic moments, helping them construct their sense of self and reality during wartime (Daughtry, 2014). According to Daughtry (2014), an ethnomusicologist specialised in sound and war context, explains in his work how "in addition to increasing the pulse, music is used to exert a measure of control in a terrifying situation" (Daughtry, 2014, pp 12). Daughtry further explains how soldiers use individual playlists in their everyday lives and common rituals, such as mentally preparing themselves to get in the "correct mindset" before combat (Daughtry, 2014).

In the medical field, music has been gaining more relevance (Hennenberg, et al, 2023) and playlists are being used in different ways and gaining attention in the Health and Care fields (e.g. Gerdner, 2013. Garrido S. et al., 2019. O'Sullivan et al., 2015). One example is the use of playlists in palliative care. In this field, playlists can be use to help relieve pain for chronically or terminally ill patients. Dr Unwin (2016), an expert in geriatric and palliative Medicine from Canada, emphasised the importance of music during the last days of a terminal cancer patient. Unwin suggested that playing songs that hold meaning for the patient helped him and his wife cope during some difficult and painful situations. Unwin mentioned that he created two playlists under these topics, named "Aging Playlist" and "Hospice Playlist" for medical use (Unwin, 2016).

A relevant study worth noting is the work of Istvanditi, a cultural sociologist with re- search interests in music and memory. Istvanditi deepens her research on a specific kind of playlist, classified as "autobiographical" or, as she refers to it, a "lifetime soundtrack". Itsvanditi describes this type of song selection as "the metaphorical collection of music that relates in unique and

personal ways to a person's autobiographical memories" (Istvanditi, 2014, p. 6). In her work, she considers that this "lifetime soundtrack" is established through childhood experiences and that music can work as an archive for memory (Istvandity, 2014).

Several studies have been conducted within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and music (e.g. Harris, I., 2022. Maloney, L. & O'Neill, K. & Gray, J., 2021). Some of these studies have contribute with valuable insights.Research has explored the role of listening to music in enhancing well-being during the pandemic (Fleshner, 2021). This study analised a dataset of playlists created online during the early stages of the pandemic illuminating how people used playlist creation as a coping mechanism during this period. Fleshner (2021) investigatess into the use of music to express emotions and as a space to reflect on the pandemic experience. This study focused on one piece of classical music (Mahler's Adagietto) and how it made students reflect and articulate different emotions during the COVID-19 lockdown. Another study about music as a tool to regulate emotions during the pandemic (Hennessy et al., 2021) sheds light into how people from different cultural backgrounds used music to regulate their emotions during lockdown. Lastly, another relevant research within the intersection of COVID-19 and music, studies the impact of the lockdown and social distancing measures and how music and sound became instruments to regulate public behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gagatsis, A., & Gillies , R., 2021). This literature helps us understanding the different ways people used music during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The focus of this research is to explore the creation of a playlist that connects songs and playlist creators through the theme of 'COVID-19'. The playlist needs to be collective in order to accommodate this concept.

1.4 Research Motivation

1.4.1 Personal Motivation

I chose the research topic and the geographical location for four reasons. First, my personal experience and knowledge of the city. Second, the

collective action and resilience displayed by its inhabitants, particularly during major crises. Third, my academic and professional background. Fourth, is a combination of my experience during the lockdown and the significance of music in my life. The covid-19 lockdown highlighted the significance of music in my life, particularly how music and playlists have helped me navigate challenging experiences and transitions.

1.4.2 Personal Experience and Familiarity with Mexico City

My first reason for choosing Mexico City is my experience with this city throughout the years. I was born in Mexico City, but my parents and extended family are from Chiapas, a southern state of Mexico, specifically from two small towns at the Guatemala border. After one of the significant earthquakes in 1985 in Mexico City, we moved back to Chiapas when I was five.

My parents are an example of how the city's construction was shaped by internal migration. As Giglia indicates in her anthropological study of Mexico's capital:

'When rural inhabitants arrived in Mexico City, they took part as main characters in their building process, directly creating more than half of the space that today forms the Metropolis and they became urban inhabitants in the period of a generation' (Giglia, 2012, p. 84).

The way rural inhabitants settled and built their homes in Mexico City with their own hands changed how the city was shaped and assembled.

I returned to the city at 25, moving from a smaller city to one of the world's most extensive and populated cities. I lived in Mexico City for over ten years, before moving to Scotland to start my doctorate at the University of Glasgow. As a foreigner from the south of Mexico, I had an outsider view of the city and its people. However, over my ten years living there, I learned the internal mechanics of the city and how people interacted with public spaces and each other. I learned codes of behaviour and the relationship people and places have with music.

1.4.3 Mexico City and its relationship with Resilience and Solidarity

As part of my personal motivation for keeping Mexico City as the research setting during the adjustments of my project is the interest in Mexico City's inhabitants and their unique resilience, notably displayed during two major earthquakes that affected the city on different levels. The first, on September 19, 1985, claimed around 45,000 lives, and the second, on the same date in 2017, resulted in over 260 casualties, with many people trapped in buildings and rescued by civilians. These experiences have ingrained in the population a deep understanding of emergency response, community involvement, solidarity and resilience (Abeldaño Zuñiga, 2019). As some studies document, their response and solidarity have consistently been of a physical, hands-on nature. As the following quote about the emergency response after the September 2017 earthquake notes:

"In the immediate moments after the earthquake, people ran into the streets, and others leapt into action, assisting the wounded and digging at the rubble from top- pled buildings, using bare hands or any objects they could find in a desperate search against time for survivors."
(Jasso Ortega , 2018, p.200)

I was in Mexico City during both earthquakes. I was just two years old during the first one, but its impact on my family was significant enough for them to move back to Chiapas three years later. By the time of the second earthquake, I was already in the planning stages of moving to Glasgow. I remember standing in the middle of the street with all my neighbours while the alarms blared. One lady who owns a store in the corner of my block, around their 50s, was keeping everyone calm, and seconds before the earthquake ended, she commanded us to collect all the buckets we had and bring them with us. Just minutes after the earthquake stopped most young men in my building rode their bicycles to assess the situation and check for collapsed buildings nearby. It was then that I realised the buckets were meant

to collect all the pieces of the buildings and help people trapped inside as quickly as possible.

The pandemic crisis demanded a different approach from the usual ways the residents were used to responding. The way this Covid-19 pandemic required the collective to care for each other in a way that was the opposite of what inhabitants in Mexico were used to. It demanded isolation and distance. I was concerned about how they would cope and react to these rules and how they would manage the crisis. I was also interested in learning how music could play a role in this process.

1.4.4 Academic and Professional Background

The second motivation behind choosing playlists as an object of study stems from my career and studies at the intersection of Art, Storytelling, and Culture. With an undergraduate degree in Communication, specialising in Media and Audiovisuals, and a master's in communication and visual Languages, I have worked in the audiovisual field for over 16 years, using different narrative tools across fields such as fiction, illustration, video and animation. I worked on a piece about grief and the pandemic (Alchemy Experiment et al., 2021) for an exhibition on COVID-19. This work helped me understand how to express and communicate grief on an art-related platform.

Storytelling and narrative have been central to my work. I have worked on Television, participated in International Art Fairs (Gran Salón México, 2015) and have written several pieces of fiction and non-fiction writing (Gascón, 2010, 2011, 2023).The aim of my research for my Master's project 'Capturing the Silence: Five Audiovisual Postcards to Interpret Behaviour of Silence as a Narrative Element in an Audiovisual Structure' (Gascón, 2017) was to locate the silence as an essential element of storytelling in audiovisual narratives and to find out how each silence was different and how every space developed a unique silence.

While conducting fieldwork for my master's dissertation, I explored the prevalence of silence in daily life by keeping a written log of sounds at specific times and locations. During this process, I discovered instances of

music in between the everyday sounds of the city. Along with my intent to find different types of silence, my fieldwork revealed an underlying playlist in the everyday life of the city. This sparked my curiosity and interest on playlists as narrative tools leading to a proposal for this doctoral research.

1.4.5 Significance of music in my life and this study

Music has played a profound role in shaping both my personal journey and my academic pursuits. A significant moment occurred between May and July 2020, during the COVID-19 lockdown's initial months. I started contemplating how our lives had abruptly changed, and how we were all trying to cope with the isolation. Curious to find out more about the intersection of music and the lockdown experience, I initiated the project 'Postcards from the Lockdown'. I documented the spaces people inhabited during the lockdown, particularly exploring the significance of music in these confined environments. I invited in-person and online friends to share videos answering questions about their spaces and showing their 'quarantine song' (Postcards of the Lockdown, 2020).

The project not only helped me understand and process my Lockdown but also aligned with the core themes of my research—exploring the role of music during times of crisis. The project featured diverse perspectives from various locations, including Mexico (Chiapas, Yucatán, and Mexico City), England (Birmingham), and Scotland (Edinburgh and Glasgow). This work was a lighthearted first exploration of what this study will become, born from my willingness to connect with others while feeling uncertain and afraid at the beginning of the lockdown. It gave me a first glance at the fact that we were all going through this pandemic feeling in similar ways. It made me realise we were less alone than we thought during this time.

Beyond research, music has been an essential companion in my life, helping me navigate complex emotions and transitions in my life. They have helped me connect with family and find life-lasting friends. Playlists, in particular, have been a powerful tool for navigating challenging moments and coping with significant transitions. For instance, I created a playlist to help me

process the heartbreak of a long-term relationship, or to help me during the process of moving to the UK to start the PhD. Playlists are my way of narrating and reconfiguring life through music.

In essence, my passion for playlists is rooted in my curiosity towards the possibilities they hold towards being a means to tell diverse stories and the connections these stories can ignite. This interest has been the driving force behind my research, which seeks to engage with the context of the impact of the COVID-19 lockdown and the rich cultural background of Mexico City's residents.

1.5 Research Setting

In December 2019, the highly infectious coronavirus disease was identified in Wuhan, China. Since then, the spread of the virus progressed quickly across the world. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency; later on, in March, it characterised the outbreak as a pandemic. The Committee noted that isolating and social distancing measures could interrupt the spread of the virus (WHO, 2020). As a result, many countries implemented measures that required social distancing and the use of face masks in public spaces. Mexico – my country of origin – and Scotland – the country in which I live – entered lockdown simultaneously. On March 22 and March 20, respectively, bars, nightclubs, movie theatres, and museums were closed, and international flights were cancelled. While in Scotland, it was strictly advised to leave home only for emergencies, grocery shopping, or once a day for exercise alone (with the police presence to reinforce this requirement), in Mexico, using a face mask in any public space was mandatory. However, there was no control of the police over how many times someone could go out. As the pandemic unfolded and the possibility of a lockdown was evident, I realised that inhabitants in Mexico City would have a challenging time coping without access to public spaces. The measures required to curb the pandemic would undoubtedly impacted Mexico City, where everyday life is connected to public spaces. The potential unavailability of these spaces became a source of concern for me, considering the importance of community engagement for its

inhabitants and the role public spaces play in Mexico City's cultural and historical background.

I decided to maintain Mexico City as the setting of my research during the COVID-19 pandemic mainly because of the city's unique qualities, which were significant for the new study. Mexico City's crisis experience has given its inhabitants a deep sense of community and social cooperation during critical moments. These characteristics are valuable to understanding how individuals cope with challenging times like the pandemic.

Mexico City residents have a deep connection with their city. When the buildings turned to ruins, they were physically connected with it. They saved people's lives with their bare hands and created a relationship with the space and the city. I considered conducting interviews during these times of crisis would offer some insights. It would give some information into how its inhabitants, characterised by its response to emergencies in a community-driven way, would cope with a crisis that asked for isolation and distance. How they would adapt their resilience during this challenging time, all while reflecting on the significance this unique context would reflect on my study.

1.6 The Covid-19 Pandemic context

At the end of 2019, the coronavirus disease was identified in Wuhan, China, and since then, the spread of the virus rapidly spread worldwide. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2022) declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency. In March 2020, WHO assessed the outbreak as a pandemic. The Committee advised that implementing isolation and social distancing measures could help curb the spread of the virus. As a result, many countries enforced rules that required social distancing and wearing face masks in public spaces.

In Mexico, the Ministry of Health stated extraordinary actions to deal with the sanitary emergency of the pandemic. "All non-essential activities" were suspended, and inhabitants in Mexico were urged to stay home. This meant that bars, movie theatres and buildings hosting non-essential activities were

closed. Although there was no surveillance of how many times people could go out of their houses or the reasons for doing it, there was enforcement to keep a safe distance from each other, and it was mandatory to use masks in open and closed spaces.

The emotional impact of the pandemic was unprecedented in modern times. The impact of this COVID-19 pandemic in Mexico was clear. Studies show that during the initial phase of the COVID-19 crisis, inhabitants in Mexico reported moderate to highly severe psychological distress. (Quiroga-Garza et al., 2021).

The number of suicides increased during the first phase of the pandemic and continued until the middle of 2020. Although people of all ages were affected, a study shows that older women were the target more affected (Borges, 2022). There are factors associated with clinically significant depressive symptomatology (CSDS) that become more relevant and present in Mexico during and after the pandemic. Some findings suggest that there was an increase in these factors that play a role in the development and prevalence of CSDS in the Mexican population during the pandemic, like:

"Stressful events, having a major functional limitation, not having social support from family or friends, being female, having suffered recent discrimination, alcohol or other drug use (by oneself or someone at home), not being married or cohabiting, living in a rural area, having had a diagnosis of COVID-19, having lost a job, living with a chronic patient, not doing physical exercise, and having a low educational level"
(Valencia et al., 2021)

Rossi, a psychoanalyst living in Mexico City, tells how signs of depression appeared in the first three months of the pandemic (Rossi, 2021), with much uncertainty and silence.
Moreover, the tedious passage of time was something that started getting into the inhabitants: "Words began to evade us, and we began to wonder: What day is it? Timelessness had never been so present; the days became diluted and forgotten, or else were felt to be all identical." and as something I would deepen in Chapter 4, in my findings, it hurt Mexicans deeply not being able to

mourn in company, in community, as we tend to deal with almost anything: "There was sadness at not being allowed to attend the funeral parlor, rage at not having been able to mourn, to say goodbye, to offer comfort, and consolation." (Rossi, 2021, p. 114). Understanding the emotional impact of the pandemic in Mexico and its habitants, and how people used to cope and navigate adversities collectively, provides context for the study. It sheds light on participants' experiences during the pandemic and during the interview, offering insight into how they were navigating this experience, their struggles and coping mechanisms.

There are important studies that explore the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic in relation with music, like the specialised journals: 'Social Convergence in Times of Spatial Distancing: The Role of Music During the COVID-19 Pandemic' (Hansen et al., 2022) and the special issue 'Musicking through COVID-19: Challenges, Adaptations, and New Practices' (Williams et al., 2021). These collections offer diverse perspectives on how the pandemic impacted individuals and people working with music across different fields. However, while this literature provides important knowledge on this topic, there are still some remaining gaps that are worth addressing. My study provides an in-depth understanding of how people experienced the lockdown and how they represented this experience through playlists. By incorporating personal and collective narratives, my re- search aims to contribute to knowledge with insights into this experience interlinked with music. Studying the intersection of personal narratives and collective narratives, playlists and the pandemic lockdown. My study fills a gap by adopting and autoethnographic approach, connecting personal experience of lockdown in Glasgow with the participant's experience in Mexico City.

1.7 Purpose of the study

This study seeks to investigate the potential of playlists in expressing and coping with the COVID-19 lockdown in Mexico City and Glasgow. The research aims to explore how people used playlists to convey memories, emotions and experiences of the pandemic. By examining playlists as a narrative tool, the study aims to understand how they helped individuals make sense of this

challenging period and find meaning in their lockdown experience.

Furthermore, this study aims to highlight the significance of sharing these musical narratives with others, fostering a sense of connection with others and the collective pandemic experience. Within this context, playlists served as containers for the collective memories, thoughts, and emotions of a specific moment.

This investigation studies into the participant's experience during the lockdown, offering valuable insights into how music helped individuals navigate the pandemic's challenges on a collective and personal level. This research also aims to highlight the importance of playlists as a form of storytelling and their potential to foster empathy and connection, even in times of social isolation.

This study explores the role of music playlists in helping individuals make sense of the COVID-19 pandemic experience. Moreover, it aims to reflect on how playlists can serve as a reflective tool, allowing individuals to revisit and unpack their lockdown experiences with the agency from their side. This research discusses the potential of playlists to become containers for the memories, thoughts, and emotions that defined that period.

1.8 Scholarly Contribution of the Study

Through playlists framed as narrative instruments, this chapter sheds light on their capacity to capture the essence of a specific moment and place, such as the COVID-19 lockdown in Mexico City. By offering a deeper perspective into how music and playlist creation affected individuals personally and collectively during this extraordinary period. I specifically aim to address the role of playlists as social tools and the interviews that the playlists elicit, to gain better insights into the pandemic experience. Here, I will provide a brief preview of the main scholarly contributions that my research makes.

a) My study on playlists during the covid-19 lockdown contributes to our understanding of the role of music in times of crisis. The study offers

insights into the emotional patterns the participants and I went through during the lockdown. It also provides an understanding of the different uses of playlists with the COVID-19 lockdown as the background. By presenting a participant-centred approach to playlist creation during the pandemic lockdown, the study explored different elements, including the many approaches taken to playlist creation. As well as the significance of the reflection process while curating a playlist.

b) I introduce two concepts around playlists: playlists as scaffolding structures and playlists as curio cabinets for self-narrative and storing emotional memories. These concepts enriched the theoretical perspective on playlists within the context of the COVID-19 lockdown in two distinct geographical locations: Mexico City and Glasgow.

c) Participant-Researcher Dynamic. The interviews were a fundamental element of this research. Reflecting on the participant-researcher dynamic in qualitative interviews, especially during emotionally demanding research. I highlight the personal impact of being witnessed during vulnerable times. I underscore how being seen and heard positively influenced coping mechanisms, offering insights into the personal and collective dimensions of the lockdown experience.

d) This research offers a unique contribution connecting the concepts of playlists sharing during a time of crisis with the principles of Narrative Medicine. Helping us understand that our experience during the pandemic was a holistic one, embedding body and mind, affecting our internal and external narratives. I introduce the concept: "Shared Experiential Witnessing" adding a dimension to my research that focuses on the reciprocal and transformative impact of sharing narratives during a specific challenging context, such as the COVID-19 lockdown.

e) My research provides a collective perspective on the lockdown experience. Through studying the intersection and shared emotional spaces through playlists, my research identified key landmarks of collective experiences during the lockdown. These insights are mapped

out to serve as a reflective tool, offering guidance on the emotional spaces inhabited by the participants and myself during the COVID-19 lockdown. This study contributes to knowledge by providing a framework for understanding the different and collective emotional spatialities we inhabited during the lockdown through the study of playlists. This contributes to a richer understanding of the emotional geographies experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

f) A significant contribution of this study lies in the development of a unique methodology tailored to explore the role of playlists during the COVID-19 lockdown. The methodology I developed involved a participant-centered approach to playlist creation, using the playlists as music elicitation tools to uncover the playlists creation process and to enable discussions about the lockdown experience. The development of this method was instrumental in capturing the collective experiences of the pandemic.

1.9 Structure of the Thesis

The structure of the thesis consists of six chapters, which contribute to the exploration of the role music played in individuals' lives (and mine) during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review: In this chapter, I discuss the relevant literature that in- forms and contextualises this research. The interest of the Literature Review is around three main subjects that align with the interest of this study: 1) The role of music and playlists in storytelling 2) how music can foster community connection through musical experience, and 3) the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The first section goes deep into the aspects of playlist creation. It explores the process of curating playlists, delving into the different elements that could be employed to create a musical narrative. Through exploring relevant studies and research findings, this section focuses on the elements of the

playlists, the personal dimensions of their creation and their potential to contain personal stories and emotions. The second section explores the socio-cultural dimension of playlists, highlighting the ways music and playlists can shape forms of connection, deepen meaningful relationships and contribute to the creation of community bonds and a sense of belonging. This section highlights the collective aspects of playlist and music sharing and its significance in interpersonal relationships. The third and final section situates music within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The literature selected for this segment explores the role music plays in helping us navigate these challenging moments. This section reveals the ways music became a channel for expression, emotional regulation and a source of solace during the pandemic. The literature notes that music was a significant instrument for processing emotions and its role as a comforting presence during the lockdown.

Overall, this chapter brings together the relevant literature that helps highlight the different roles of music in the human experience and its relevance during moments of crisis as an element that helps us cope. Moreover, it contextualises this research within the relevant literature, offering a perspective to comprehend the different aspects and nuances of music and playlists.

Chapter 3 – Methodology: In this chapter, I discuss the research methodology and approach of the study, including the data collection, the analysis approach and the ethical considerations. I will also discuss the research design and its changes and evolution due to the challenges imposed by the pandemic, explaining the initial conception of the study and the adaptations it underwent due to the unfolding pandemic. Additionally, I will discuss the recruitment process, and the tools used to engage the participants. This chapter gives insights into the method design used to reach participants, considering the shift it had to make to online data collection. The tools for the data gathering, such as in-depth narrative interviews, and the priority of keeping the participants at the centre of the study, creating a space where they feel safe and have all the possible agency to tell their story. Moreover, I discuss the use of music elicitation as a tool used to complement and

accompany the interviews, highlighting their role in help- ing the participants navigate their pandemic experiences by creating playlists. Later on, I will dive into the data analysis process, which involves the challenges I faced trying first to maintain a detached role and the transition towards choosing an Autoethnographic approach. I will discuss the way Autoethnography served as a bridge between my personal and academic aspects of myself to help me make sense of the findings in a meaningful manner. Overall, this chapter highlights the planning of the method design and the methodological approach and how they served as a guide and foundation to cap- ture the pandemic stories told by the participants through the playlists in a more human and empathetic way.

Chapter 4 - Findings: This chapter presents my research findings. Here, I discuss the identified themes, patterns, and the emotional experiences and qualities of playlists, revealed through the analysis of the participant's interviews and experience and my own experience of the lockdown. Highlighting how the participants and I used music to navigate these complex times. I start the chapter by exploring the evolution of data analysis and the importance of taking enough time for data reflection. Then, I reflect on the interviews and discussions regarding the lockdown experience, as manifested through the selected songs. These interviews created a story thread between the playlists per se, meaning the title chosen but the participants, the order of the songs that they decided, the reasons behind each song while at the same time they hold the story of their lockdown. Elicited by the playlist, which enabled discussions about their lockdown experiences and facilitated the exchange of experience between the participant and myself. The following is the in-depth study and creation of the ten main categories that emerged from participants and my playlists. These moments capture various aspects of the lockdown, containing emotions such as grief, joy, and internal changes. I close this chapter by contemplating the role of music and playlists in assisting individuals during challenging times.

Chapter 5 - Discussion: In this chapter, I interpret the findings and explore the implications of the research. I also reflect on how playlists contribute to discovering the nuances of how we connect with others, reflecting on our

experiences and helping us navigate the pandemic lockdown. The Discussion chapter provides a comprehensive discussion of the research findings, weaving together the insights gathered through the reflection of the different ways music and playlists played a role during the lockdown. Four KFs emerged from this discussion, each giving an insight into the individual and collective aspect of playlist creation and sharing in the context of COVID-19. The first finding highlights how the playlist creation process can serve as a reflective and narrative medium, allowing participants to curate their stories through songs that are meaningful to them. The second discovery focuses on the significance of the act of sharing playlists and the stories behind them and how this act can channel a sense of empathy and connection, helping alleviate feelings of isolation. The third key subject centres on the act of bearing wit- ness to the lockdown experience through the sharing of the playlist and listening to the experiences contained in it. How bearing witness helps to foster a sense of being seen and validation of the experiences for the ones who share them and the ones that listen to the stories. Finally, the last finding considers playlists as a map of the emotional geographies of the lockdown experience. It sheds light on how the music and lockdown experiences intersect to create these geographies shared themes and emotions. All these findings signify the significance of playlist creation and the dimension they can hold when they intersect with challenging experiences such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They let us know how these playlists encompass personal stories but also can go further and evolve into a collective narrative that allows us to have a better understanding of the complex nuances of a relevant moment in humanity.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion: In the final chapter I enlist the KFs about the playlists and their significance in the context of the COVID-19 lockdown in Mexico City. This chapter focused in the different implications of the playlists in the context of channeling times, such as the pandemic, drawn from this study. I will also reflect on how these KFs can contribute to the field of music and cultural studies. Within this chapter I will also ac- knowledge the limitations encountered during the study, as this research developed within the complex context of the pandemic. Afterwards, I will also discuss some recommendations for future research and its potential to explore more in this area. Finally, I will discuss the significance of this research and its original

contribution as a document of academic insight into musical narratives within the pandemic. I will highlight how this study revealed the role of music and to be a source of expression for human experiences during a moment of collective uncertainty. I will conclude this thesis sharing my final reflections on my research journey.

In the following chapter, I will discuss the literature review conducted prior to the fieldwork, which I continued updating throughout the data analysis.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the relevant literature on three main subjects that align with this research. The focus revolves around understanding the role of music and playlists in storytelling, community connection and how we use music in the context of the COVID-19 lockdown. It is divided in three sections, section 2.1 focuses on the personal aspect of playlist creation, exploring the different elements that can be used to create playlists and how playlists can also be used as a means of self-expression, construction of identity and emotional regulation. Studies in section 2.2 note playlists' sociocultural significance while delving into different ways song shapes new forms of connection and deepen relationships. Last, section 2.3 places music in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, showing its relevant role in helping us navigate challenging times. The studies in this section reveal how music became a means for expressing emotions, finding solace and maintaining a sense of connection during isolation. In summary, this chapter underscores, through a collection of relevant literature, the ability of music to help us create and tell our experiences, find a sense of connection and deepen the ones we already have and highlight how fundamental music was during the COVID-19 lock- down, becoming a mean to process complex emotions, providing comfort and making us feel connected amid isolation.

2.2 Playlists as Narrative Tools

A playlist is a way to tell a story, and like any other storytelling medium, it needs elements for its creation. I have found valuable and interesting literature that will be used as a guide in searching for some of the fundamental elements needed to create a playlist. I will first draw parallels between mixtapes and playlists, acknowledging the lineage between these two forms of music collection. Further on, I will explore studies that study how music contributes to the formation of identity and self, focusing on how music has a role in constructing individual and collective identities. Moreover,

I will investigate relevant literature on the role of memory and biographical elements in playlist construction, noting how playlists serve as repositories of personal and shared experiences. Furthermore, I will emphasise the relevance of contextual elements such as time and space in playlist creation through literature that has researched those topics. Lastly, the focus goes to the curation aspect of the playlist creation process, understanding the intentions behind song selection, and the importance of curation in shaping the narrative through the playlists.

2.2.1 The mixtape

As mentioned in the introduction, a *playlist* is technically defined as a sequence of digital songs which then are "represented symbolically on a digital device in list form" (Rochow, 2010, p. 10). In its format, then, a playlist is constituted by songs (or sounds) and a title. However, in terms of its content and meaning, a playlist is closer to a mixtape, which means its primary purpose is to communicate something, or tell a story. The properties that define a mixtape for what it is, meaning the aesthetics, the intention behind its creation, and the narrative that pursues to convey, among other elements, make it the precursor of the playlist.

Mixtapes are an important element to take into account for this research, considering that the playlist is an 'evolved' branch of this format. On this matter, the work of Fenby- Hulse is relevant, and he has focused on the mixtape and the mixtape culture in the last two decades. Throughout history, the mixtape has served as a fundamental element working as a medium for constructing and maintaining significant cultural and musical expression particularly in some cultures such as hip-hop culture (Ball, 2009. Glennon, 2019). Unlike popular music, that were available on mainstreams platforms, mixtapes allowed for the distribution of live show mixes and songs that were not mainstream. In line with this, Fenby-Hulse, researcher in music and communications, emphasises that   the mixtape was simultaneously an object and a social activity. He notes that making a mixtape consisted of crafting with intention and attention to detail a sequence of songs to accompany a specific event or activity, to convey a message to friends or loved ones (Fenby-Hulse, 2017).

Up until now, the playlist still embodies the essence of conveying a message through storytelling an emotional connection, even as it transitions to new platforms. The main difference between a playlist and an actual mixtape (some playlists titled 'mixtapes' aim to duplicate all the elements, like the number of songs and aesthetics) is that a mixtape is an object. As such, it has this extra dimension where cover art and the object play a part in the message. The playlist has tried to materialise this aesthetic by accompanying the list of songs with a specific image and title. Being an object, too, it has a limited possibility of songs, which makes the selection of the songs even more detailed, whilst the digital playlists have no maximum of songs. Fenby-Hulse develops an exciting investigation into how digital playlists and mixtapes have in common the way they combine music listening and storytelling (Fenby-Hulse, 2017). He points to the potential these new ways of storytelling have regarding 'emotional connections and identi ty formation' (Fenby-Hulse, 2017).

2.2.2 Identity and construction of self

This section focuses on relevant literature that addresses the role of music and playlists in identity construction. In this context, DeNora's research (1999, 2000, 2006) on the relevance and role of music in daily life is important for this study. DeNora's ethnographic approach to music and its role in constructing everyday experience is valuable from the perspective of taking the listeners as active co-creators of their surroundings, acknowledging their agency. Hagen's study (2015,2016) on digital platforms reveals how playlists contribute to self-understanding through mood, memory, and personal connections. Kibby's work (2019) aligns playlist creation with the organisational process of digital music archives, highlighting the duality of playlists as both archives and social practices. Bruin-Mollenhorst's studies (2020) on musical eulogies at funerals underscores the communal aspect of constructing identity through playlists. These perspectives provide a comprehensive understanding of how music and playlists can be part of the process of the construction of self.

On this matter, DeNora (1999, 2000, 2006) and her research into music and its

importance in everyday life are of significant help. DeNora's ethnographic investigation of music and how it helps construct everyday experience is valuable from the perspective of taking the listeners as active co-creators of their surroundings, and she con- siders their agency. Since this research aims to understand the insights of how playlists are created for a specific mean and within a specific context, is important to consider the perspective of using music as a resource or tool used by those involved in the playlist creation. As established in Chapter 1, objects can become a bridge, as music converts itself into a device or resource to produce a narrative guide of self (DeNora, 2006). The value of DeNora's finding is that she places the importance in the intention behind the selection and playing of the music: 'to play music as a virtual means of expressing/constructing emotion is also to define the temporal and qualitative structure of that emotion, to play it out in real-time and then move on. Music is both an instigator and a container of feelings' (DeNora, 1999. pp.42).

DeNora also considers music as a device to access memory, which is part of the concept of self and its construction. She considers that the past can be 'musically conjured' and used to produce real-time agency (DeNora, 1999). A concept shared with DeNora in this research is the idea of music as a 'container' or 'scaffolding' as a way individuals can use music to navigate their reality and experiences.

Under the subject of the creation of self and construction of identity through music, the work of Hagen, a music and media researcher, is relevant to this project. She investigates, among other topics, playlists on digital platforms and the way streaming users make sense of the creation, maintenance and use of their personal playlists (Hagen, 2015). Hagen used qualitative methods of interviews and observation. Her subjects were asked to write diary entries connected with music streaming in different periods. During her research, Hagen found that many playlists were curated based on moods, feelings, memories, or biographical meaningful connections. These factors helped the user better understand the self (Hagen, 2015). Hagen's research recognises the relevance of curating music listening experiences with individual preferences, mood and context. In my study, participants curated their

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playlists to reflect their lockdown experience, highlighting the relevance of curation and personalisation.

Furthermore, Hagen's exploration of curatorial practices highlights how participants en- gaged in selecting, arranging, and sequencing songs to create a cohesive and meaningful listening experience. This recognition of the participants' role as curators resonates with the research, where creating and managing personal playlists became a means of story- telling, reflection, and connection.

Another relevant study conducted on music and digital collections is by Kibby. Her study shows how these personal archives of digital music acquire a material dimension by going into the organisation process, accessing and classification (Kibby, 2009), similar to the steps taken for crafting a playlist. Through interviewing 35 young people with a digital music collection, she identified the duality presented in music through crafting these archives: 'a music collection is at once an archive and a participatory practice.' (Kibby, 2009. pp. 428).

Last in this section is the study from Bruin-Mollenhorst, a researcher and musician whose studies offer a different perspective on music and the construction of the self. Bruin-Mollenhorst's research focuses on the ritual of contemporary funerals, disclosing how music intersects with emotions and the deceased person's identity (Bruin-Mollenhorst, 2020). Through the observations of 44 funerals, paying attention to specific aspects during the funeral linked with the music, such as the repertoire played (which is, in fact, the playlist of the funeral), if part of the lyrics were referred in other moments of the funeral and how the music was announced, among others aspects. Bruin-Mollenhorst emphasises the role of music in symbolising the deceased's identity, which is crafted by the next of kin through song selection. The playlist becomes a collective action during the funeral service, as attendants listen to it together, 'constructing the deceased's identity together with all mourners present at the funeral also binds the mourners into a community' (Bruin-Mollenhorts, 2020, pp.35). The author refers to the process of constructing the deceased's identity through music in a

collaborative as a 'musical eulogy' (Bruin-Mollenhorts, 2020).

2.2.3 Memory and Biographical Elements

This section will discuss how memory and biographical events are elements relevant to the construction of playlists for different studies. First is the case of Istvandity's re- search (2014) about music and how it is intertwined with memory. Second is the work done by the organisation "Playlists for Life", an organisation based in Glasgow, United Kingdom, that seeks to improve the quality of life of people with dementia via individualised music (Playlist for Life, 2015), and third is the work of van Djick (2016), whose work explores how discussion and interaction regarding music, in a collective way can con- tribute to the formation of individual and collective identities and collective memory.

Istvandity explores deep into the subject of songs and memories with a concept she ti- tles the 'lifetime soundtrack'. She describes it as 'the metaphorical canon of music that accompanies life experiences' (Istvandity, 2014, p. 16). This 'lifetime soundtrack' is, in a way, the study of an individual playlist framed under one narrative or theme. Her work

focuses on the intersection of memory as an experience of the self and music represent- ed as songs. The configuration of this playlist and its study are particular because of the process of the way the songs are selected. The songs in these lists are not always chosen because they are the favourite or linked to positive emotions. Some of the songs became a part of a lifetime soundtrack due to being intertwined with sad or traumatic experiences, part of the memories of someone. This type of playlist functions more like an archive and, simultaneously, as an autobiographical narrative.

Contrary to the nature of a curated playlist, these lifetime soundtracks are not created to be shared with someone else or to regulate their emotions but to serve as a document of their autobiographical memories. These songs (and soundtracks) are self-reflective and deeply personal, just like the ones my participant and I created, but they function more as a documentation of one's

life rather than a curation. While the thread of storytelling remains consistent, the configuration of these playlists varies.

Istvandity's approach for recollecting individual or collective memories weaved with songs is relevant when considering the recollection of songs for the collective playlists for this research. Her research revealed that some participants made projections about future memories using music. They would use songs to create a memory they and others would experience (Istvandity, 2014) which mirrors how some of the participants used some songs to think about their lives after the pandemic in my study. Istvandity also explores the life soundtrack concept, connecting to how music listening while on the move or 'being mobile' (like listening to music while going in a car) can affect the formation of memories. This means that while being on the move, unique conditions are provided regarding time and space, affecting the formation of musical memories.

The importance that is given to the subject of memory and music and the way these two are intimately related is something explored with detail linked directly with the concept of the playlist by 'Playlist for Life' an organisation based in Glasgow, United Kingdom, that seeks to improve the quality of life of people with dementia via individualised mu- sic (Playlist for life, 2015). 'Playlist for Life' focuses on using songs related to personal memory and emotions. Music is integrated into the patient's life and with the patient's preferences (Gender, 2013). In other words, they were creating a personal playlist for patients with dementia. These playlists have shown positive clinical outcomes after consistent and appropriate use of individualised music with patients, such as decreased psychotropic drugs, agitation or disruptive behaviours, among others (Gerdner, 2013). Their methods are both exciting and closely aligned with what my research aims to achieve as a next step: the tools are accessible online and can be downloaded by anyone who de- sires to create a playlist. They use the concept of "Music detective" for the person making the questions and finding out the songs that could be meaningful for someone with Alzheimer's. Additionally, Playlists for Life categorises the tracks according to memories and inherited songs, guiding a unique form of curation. The playlists created with their methods are entirely personal, with

'Playlists for Life' making a point of the relevance of the songs and their connection with emotions and how these can trigger unpleasant or pleasant emotions (Playlist for Life, 2015).

The last research on this topic is by van Dijck (2006), who states that recorded music is a fundamental element for creating personal and collective memory (van Dijck, 2006). Her examination of the correlation between personal and collective memories of popular music establishes that "human memory is simultaneously embodied, enabled, and embedded, and that (re)collective experiences are constructed through narratives (van Djick, 2006, p.01). For this study, she analysed a set of online responses generated by a national radio event (the Dutch Top 2000). Since 1999, Radio 2, a public radio station in the Netherlands, has organised a well-known five-day broadcast featuring the 2000 most popular songs of all time. The listeners of this station are the ones who create this list by sending their top 5 favourite songs. Van Djick analyses how social practices, like collective listening and the exchange of recorded music, in the intersection of cultural forms such as this radio event, can shape the way we remember and create collective memories. The research highlights that autobiographical and social memory should not be separated, highlighting a connection between them (van Djick, 2006).

2.2.4 Context: Time and space

The moment and space when a playlist is created is a relevant element that can be directly linked with the essence and narrative of said playlist. In the literature on this subject, two authors bring an interesting point of view, one from the locality and place where the playlist is contextualised (Daughtry, 2014) and one from the historical moment the playlist is created (Forman, 2002). First is the one carried out by Martin Daughtry, an academic specialising in the social dynamics of Sound. His research involves findings about the way the iPod became an essential element to soldiers during the first six years of Operation Iraqi. Daughtry deepens his research on the construction of playlists, analysing their narrative. His main interest is how music and the iPods were used to navigate different emotions and situations,

such as the death of friends and the passage of time day by day, among others.

His research sheds light on the way playlists are used on a collective level for a specific aim. According to Daughtry, soldiers who regularly engage in combat and patrol missions often co-create with other soldiers "Battle Playlists" that help them get amped up before leaving the base (Daughtry, 2014). In his research, he found out that collective listening and the creation of a playlist helped soldiers feel a sense of control over their narratives, especially in moments of danger or extreme situations, like before going to combat. Daughtry found out that group listening experiences ratify the group's sense of collective identity and made a deepest observation on an idea that is important for this re- search: the meaning of lyrics and the weight they carry on them, how mouthing the lyrics help control the narrative and equalise their feelings on the imminent reality of going to battle and the action of killing and or being killed (Daughtry, 2014). Drawing on interviews and correspondence with military members, he gets valuable information about how songs helped 'smooth' or 'pump up' soldiers' moods. His findings are valuable concerning the connection between music as a way to control a narrative and context.

The second author focuses on time perspective. Forman, a Media and Screen Studies researcher, deepens on how music has functioned as a medium to articulate individual and collective emotions. He studies the use of music during the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, in the United States. In what Forman calls a 'post-atrocity context' (Forman, 2002), music became a conductor to transmit all the emotions experienced during and after the event. Forman states that as a result, creating personalised song lists acquired a new meaning as individuals struggled to make sense of their thoughts and feelings by seeking melodies and sentiments that deeply resonate within them (Forman, 2002). According to Forman, immediately after the attacks of September 11, the New York Times and Rolling Stones reported that the call-ins from the radio listeners showed a desire to ask for songs linked with different emotions in a communal public forum, such as radio stations.

This collective response connected the event with music and song choices. Every station and its listeners presented a unique musical profile seeking to express a range of emotions through different songs and styles. Forman writes about how country stations re- quested songs by Johnny Cash while rock stations played Jimi Hendrix, and MTV listen- ers asked for Prince or Pearl Jam. Furman describes the importance of a value element for the construction of playlists: understanding the connection between affect and songs as a process of healing. This aids in crafting playlists with a meaning that can 'accompany the struggle of putting lives back into some semblance of order.' (Furman, 2002, pp. 202).

These perspectives gave me an insight of the importance of time and space in shaping the stories behind some playlists and showed me the significance of context in under- standing how individuals can reach out to others through music specially during times of crises.

2.2.5 The curation of a playlist

In the process of creating playlists, in one way or another, the process of curating a playlist is always present. The level of attention paid to this aspect may fluctuate de- pending on who is crafting it, the intention behind the creation of the playlist, and the message it aims to send, among other factors. This section has listed the literature found relevant under the concept of curation intertwined with music collections. The study by Dhaenens & Burgess (2018), a Media, Culture and Diversity, examines the creation of LGBTQ+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer) themed playlists on music streaming services, and it looks closely at the element of curation to these playlists.

They explore how LGBTQ+ identities and cultures are represented, negotiated and shaped by digital media platforms. In order to do this, the study went through a textual analysis of 37 LGBTQ-themed Spotify playlists. The authors suggest that playlists, especially when user-curated instead of using an algorithm, may help put some order and containment to the apparently infinite universe of songs, artists and albums available on the Spotify platform

(Dhaenes & Burgess, 2018).

Their study highlights the importance of the curator figure, who serves as a guide for the story the playlist would tell. When a playlist is crafted, songs are linked with elements such as aesthetic, narrative or ideology, among other elements; through their study, they note that "curators can convey particular stories and histories about (popular) music culture, which are otherwise lost or invisible in the vast archives." (Dhaenes & Burgess, 2018, p.195). Three main questions were used to analyse the playlist: Who was curating the playlist? What was the rationale behind the song selection regarding LGBTQ culture? And, considering each playlist as a whole, what were the themes or contexts? (Dhaenes & Burgess, 2018). These questions contribute to understanding playlists from the perspective of intention and context, elements considered in this research. Lastly, the concept of a 'library of libraries' as a way to constrain and give some order to the apparently infinite universe of songs (Dhaenes & Burgess, 2018) is very much related to the concept of music as a container of emotions (DeNora, 1999), which has been discussed earlier on this chapter.

Under the same subject of the intention behind a playlist and its selection of songs, the research conducted by Anja Nylund Hagen (2015, 2017) is worth noting. Notably, her re- search interest in organisation and content creation is framed in the context of social and digital media. She considers the concept of curation as a metaphor as much as a constructive structure (Hagen, 2015). Hagen sets a classification of her own for different types of playlists: static, active, temporary, random or context. Each of them also possesses a dialectic internal logic that can function concerning intentions, sense-making, and experiences, among other aspects (Hagen, 2015). As seen in the research of Dhaenens, Hagen found out that curational practices always include elements of storytelling: 'playlists curated by moods, feelings, memories, or biographical relational representations help the user experience master over the self' (Hagen, 2015, p. 642). Hagen also researched in another study how individuals using music-streaming platforms incorporate social aspects in their online interactions and how these interactions shape their experience using them. The research goes around how individuals consider the music they share

on social networks and who they follow (Hagen et al., 2017). It examines how this is experienced within negotiations of music (personal and social) through sharing music and following others.

The analysis counts 24 focus group interviews with 124 Spotify and/or Tidal users and a mixed method study that included music diaries, online observation and interviews with 12 heavy platform users. Their study suggests that users in- corporate social awareness in the diverse ways they choose the different levels of non-sharing and sharing music and the levels of ties (strong, weak or absent) they sustain with others online. They noted that negotiations of music, in individual and social dimensions, shape how individuals experience music-streaming services (Hagen et al., 2017). These studies are focused on individual playlists, as most of the research on this topic is being developed. Hence, information and knowledge about how this works in a collective nature is something that needs to be explored in a deeper manner.

2.3 Connection and Empathy Through Music

This section will discuss the several aspects of playlists as social objects, exploring their ability to facilitate communication, create new forms of connection and bonding and deepen relationships. I begin by examining studies exploring the sociocultural side of playlists, delving into how they can be tools that operate at sociocultural levels (Ro- chow, 2010). Later, I discuss studies regarding the role of music in the process of bonding within intimate relationships, with a particular focus on the connection of music with memory and emotional connections (Harris, 2020). Finally, I discuss relevant research on the significance of music rituals within families and peer groups across diverse cultures, highlighting how these rituals contribute to emotional well-being and social development (Boer, 2014). Through these different lenses, I aimed to note how other studies have found that playlists and songs can serve as an instrument for communication and bonding and as a catalyst for well-being and community.

2.3.1 Deepening social connection through music

The social connections that emerge when people share and listen to music in company or among others is a subject of great interest in this research. The initial approach will be based on the work of Kathrin Rochow, an Urban Media and Communication scholar, who has explored the playlist from a social-psychological perspective and analysed its functionality in establishing social relations and communication. In her research, Rochow (2010) notes that playlists can be both a tool for communication and a protocol or set of societal and cultural practices; she states that a playlist works on two levels: first, as a technological tool and second, as a social phenomenon. Rochow (2010) states that if the playlist as a social phenomenon can create interaction, it can generate a space where the one creating the playlist interacts with the ones listening to it. This study is relevant because it highlights how new ways of interacting are born when sharing playlists, functioning as a medium or vehicle facilitating new forms of association and, thereby, new forms of communication (Rochow, 2010). Rochow states that 'the playlist is a social object' (Rochow, 2010, p. 22), considering that through the sharing and exchanging of mu- sic, the playlist as a medium facilitates new forms of communication. The methodology used by Rochow is engaging. Her use of a qualitative approach and her interest in the definition of the self, linked to experiences and personal ideas, are valuable concepts for this research.

Another relevant research focusing on the importance of sharing music is Harris's work about couple-defining songs (CDSs) in intimate relationships (Harris, 2020). For this research, an open-ended questionnaire was developed and filled out online by two hundred participants, who reported if they had a CDS or not, describing its meaning and any memories linked to their song. The relevance of this study is the intersection between CDSs and memory (also discussed earlier in this chapter) with the assumption that 'songs are powerful memory cues'. The research coded the memories into four categories: 1) Specific episodic event, 2) Extended event, 3) categoric event, 4) lifetime period, and 5) No memory (Harris, 2020). Their findings suggest that music has multiple functions linked with enhancing relationships, particularly

positive emotions and memory (Harris, 2020).

2.3.2 Music Rituals, Families, and Peer Groups

Another study researched the importance of music listening collectively, especially in families and peer groups (Boer, 2014). Their work investigates the music rituals among families and peer groups across different cultures in adolescence and young adulthood. This study proposes that engaging in musical family rituals can be positive in developing emotional well-being due to their effects on family cohesion (Boer, 2014). The study was based on cross-sectional data from 760 young people in Germany, Kenya, New Zealand and the Philippines, and the exciting highlight is that their research revealed that, across different cultures, the direct contribution of music in peer groups on well-being. This research highlights the positive effect that musical rituals have on young people's emotional and social development across cultures (Boer, 2014).

Based on the studies mentioned above, it is clear that music can serve as a tool for self-expression, deepening social bonds and enhancing well-being. Whether it is through creating playlists as a dynamic social phenomenon, using songs to deepen connections in romantic relationships or listening to music with family and peers to enhance social skills and well-being, music holds the capacity to allow individuals to express their emotions and share their stories while allowing them to foster meaningful connections with others.

2.4 The Connection Between Music and Emotion

In this section, I focus on John Sloboda's work on music and emotion, which resonates with the approach I intended for this research. Sloboda emphasises the importance of interviews and centres the reflection on how participants connect with music and emotion through everyday life choices. He notes that most music listening occurs in ordinary, everyday life situations (Sloboda, 2011) and suggests that in emotional regulation, "the role of music might typically lie in those types of experiences rather than in an emotional effect solely determined by the music itself" (Sloboda, 2011, pp. 217).

Sloboda's research contributes to understanding the emotional and psychological connections people have with music. In his book *The Musical Mind: The Cognitive Psychology of Music* (1985), Sloboda discusses how music can evoke profound emotions ranging from joy to sorrow. In his studies, he identified physical responses such as chills and "thrills" often associated with emotional experiences of music (Sloboda, 1991). This highlights the importance of music's structural elements in shaping emotional responses, which can vary greatly among individuals based on their personal experiences, moods, and social contexts. Sloboda (1985) suggests that one of the challenges encountered when researching the emotional impact of music is the difficulty in meassuring the emotional responses in an accurate way. He notes, however that physical reactions such as what he calls "thrills" could give a way to bypass some of the blind spots from other type of meassures.

Further expanding on his work, Sloboda, along with Lamont and Greasley, in *Choosing to Hear Music: Motivation, Process, and Effect* (2016), investigates the motivations behind music listening, the process involved, and its effects on individuals. The study categorises music listening into different contexts such as travel, brain work, body work, emotional work, and attendance at live music events. One key finding is that self-chosen music has a greater emotional and functional impact compared to music chosen by others.

"Across all this research, it is clear that self-chosen music has the potential for greater emotional and functional impact in many different ways than music which is heard through others' choices" (Lamont, Greasley, & Sloboda, 2016, p.712).

These functions illustrate how music serves as a tool for emotional regulation, enhancing tasks, and creating a sense of connection and identity. Sloboda's understanding of the importance of song choice for emotional responses and everyday life activities resonates with my work and the way the participants and I choose specific songs to create our Lockdown playlists. These insights from Sloboda's work provide a valuable framework for understanding the role of music in emotional and social connections, aligning with the themes

explored in my research.

2.5 Covid-19 Context and Music

This section explores the intersection of music and the COVID-19 pandemic, shedding light on how music became a fundamental tool to get through these challenging times. Whether as a medium for expressing emotions during the lockdown, looking for solace through music or as a source of connection. Here, I discuss several studies (that were conducted around the same time as my research) that highlight the different connections between music and the COVID-19 experience.

2.5.1 Musical Group Interaction in the Pandemic

While still in the pandemic, a study investigated the connection between collective playlists in the COVID-19 context. This research explored Musical Group Interaction (MGI) and its impact on everyday music listening, focusing on prosocial tendencies, such as empathy (Harris et al., 2021). The researchers created an experimental procedure to investigate online engagement with collaborative playlists. The study aimed to determine whether the perceived presence of a partner during playlist-making could stimulate social processing and encourage prosocial behaviours. The recruited participants were told that they would be creating playlists for a virtual social event. Some of them were told they would make the playlists with another participant (a fake partner), while others were told they would do the playlist on their own but assisted by a computer algorithm. The results showed that factors such as age, musical background, and the time participants spent listening to music every day were essential influences in the context of playlist creation and listening (Harris et al., 2021). The study highlights how people can work when creating collective playlists and how this collaboration might be affected if done with the perceived idea of another person or an algorithm regarding their social tendencies and memory of the songs chosen. This research is relevant to my study because it notes the way people engage with music, especially with playlists, highlighting the social aspects of playlist creation and how the idea of collaboration impacts social behaviours such as this one.

2.5.2 Listening to Music as a Coping Mechanism

Another relevant study explores the role of music playlists and streaming within

COVID-19. This study is part of a special issue edited in Autumn 2021:

"Musicking through COVID-19: Challenges, Adaptations, and New

Practices" (Williams, J. et al. 2021); the research focuses on how people have historically used music to improve their well-being during challenging times. Personal music consumption has been a source of comfort, dis- traction or a communication tool for a long time (Maloney, Liam & O'Neill, Katherine & Gray, John. (2021). 2021). The study collected a large dataset of playlists created by anonymised Spotify users between January 1 and July 29, 2020. The data contained 25,800 playlists and over 2.7 million songs. To gather the data, the researchers developed an application that processed the playlists using a list of COVID-19-related themes.

The study observed interesting findings, such as users that used sarcasm, humour or hope to create playlists related to the pandemic. It identified six prominent subjects considering the playlist analysis:

1. Mental Health: Playlists mention mental health, including negative states like depression or anxiety, as well as efforts to care for their well-being.

2. Making and Helping: Users created the playlists not only for themselves or their well-being but to help others get through the lockdown.

3. Prayers: Some playlists had religious or spiritual themes, and no matter the orientation to religion the creators had, there was a recognition of how music facilitates prayers or spiritual activities.

4. Complaining: Many playlists showed themes around complaints or frustration to- wards the pandemic's impact on their lives.

5. Defiance: Certain playlists were created to inspire resilience against challenging times, trying to look for empowerment through music

6. Alone but United: These playlists reveal a sense of community or collective action and aim to connect with others through music while isolated during the pandemic.

Overall, this study highlights that users were, for the most part, trying to engage with the world in a positive way through their playlist creation behaviour. They would use the Spotify platform to reach out to others, use the playlists to support others or to aid with mental health issues and share the playlists when they feel it is needed (Maloney et al., 2021). The relevance of this research is in the explorations of how people harnessed the creation of playlists as a tool to navigate a challenging situation such as the pandemic and shares with my research the exploration of playlists' ability to capture and communicate personal narratives and experiences.

2.5.3 Music as an Emotional Outlet

A recent study by Fleshner (2021) explores the use of music to express emotions and reflect the pandemic experience. The study brings insight into the impact the lockdown had on our lives, especially when education and work had to shift to online classes and working from home due to the lockdown. Fleshner was teaching a class about analytic music; the last assignment was the one left for the year when the shift happened. He decided to give students a chance to write about the piece and also explore the connections of the music with what they were living at the moment. The chosen piece was the Adagietto from Mahler's Fifth Symphony. This piece was chosen because it conveys a sense of peace and longing; this was created by the dissonances and delayed rhythms in the piece, which the author considers served as a musical representation of the uncertain and delayed rhythms experienced and caused by the COVID-19 pandemic (Fleshner, 2021).

The study focuses on the intersection of personal experience and music analysis. It sheds light on the impact of COVID-19 on our lives and how the pandemic disrupted our routines and caused deep trauma. Fleshners notes that the pandemic, as a traumatic experience, needs to be acknowledged and articulated to start processing and healing (Fleshner, 2021). As an individual and professor, the author also discusses his fears and uncertainties during the pandemic. This was a refreshing perspective to find, given that throughout all the research. Reading I have done for my research it is very few studies I

found that talked about how challenging their experience and their fears and emotions during the pandemic on a personal level, about how traumatic the experience was and how it changed their life but also the way they had to attune to their different roles in life, especially as a professor in front of a class during this time. This was also at the centre of my research; the way I adjusted to my life and the distinct roles I had to embrace during the interviews and through making sense of my findings.

This study is relevant to my research as it shows the process of tuning and changing plans as needed because of the uncertainty and changing times we were going through. Fleshner shared with their students an article he wrote about music and lockdown, and having that as an example, he gave them a chance to do the same with the piece of mu- sic. The students' response to the final assignment and how many of them decided to use it to express their feelings of uncertainty, fear and even boredom they were experiencing during lockdown was something I found interesting and relevant to my research.

Inviting them to explore their emotional connections with the piece turned the assignment into a more practical space for emotional expression and reflection. The above resonates with my study, where participants and I used the playlists to express and reflect our experiences through the songs. This study reinforces how music can serve as a catalyst for individuals to process and articulate complex emotions during traumatic times such as the pandemic. Furthermore, it was also relevant for me as a researcher to find out others were advocating for a more expansive approach in academia that includes the human side, the emotional, personal and whole spectrum of the experience, to enrich the knowledge created during challenging times.

The study highlights the role of music in making sense of experiences like the Covid-19 lockdown. Also, it focuses on how music can facilitate the creation of narratives during crisis experiences. In conclusion, the study serves as a reference point for understanding the narrative role of music, which is central to my research exploring music through playlists and its potential to tell stories and process experiences.

2.5.4 Music for Mood Regulation during the pandemic

Another study by Hennesy et al. (2021) provides an interesting approach into the inter- section of the COVID-19 pandemic and music. This study highlights the role of music and mood regulation during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. The research high- lights how individuals from different cultural backgrounds used music to regulate their emotions during quarantine. During the first month of the COVID pandemic, they used an online survey to see if people from four countries used music to regulate their emotions during lockdown. The study aimed to discover whether people from four different countries used music to manage their emotions during the quarantine and if the role of music was different depending on empathy, anxiety, depression or country of residence. The study discovered a positive correlation between using music to affect regulation and current well-being, particularly among participants from India. They also found out that whether people had stronger symptoms of depression and anxiety, the final results were still positive in regulating their emotions. The findings emphasise the universality of mu- sic's potency and ability to serve as a tool for helping people manage and navigate over- whelming and unprecedented life stressors (Hennessy et al., 2021).

The study underscores that across countries, participants who felt more perceived risk of COVID-19 and those who were personally more impacted by COVID-19 reported better mood after engaging with music during the pandemic, suggesting that people heavily affected by the pandemic were more likely to seek solace in music. Moreover, the re- search notes that people who faced real difficulties due to COVID-19 (not just perceived risk) used music to experience and regulate a range of emotions (such as mental reflection, finding solace or feeling intense emotions). This demonstrates the different strategies people rely on when anticipating stressful situations compared to actually going through them (Hennessy et al., 2021).

The timing of this study, conducted during the early stages of the pandemic, aligns closely with the period of my data collection and interviews. The study offers contextual relevance for my participant's experience by shedding light on the experience individuals went through during the early times of the pandemic. There was still little knowledge about the virus, which heightened the uncertainty about how this would impact their lives if they or their close ones contracted COVID-19. Furthermore, the study notes that individuals more impacted by the pandemic tended to listen to more acoustic and soft music, and those who used music to discharge negative feelings listened to more energetic music, consistent with how some people used music to release negative emotions.

The findings from this study give solid support for the significance of music in being a tool for regulation affect during a time of crisis and aligns closely with the themes and narratives uncovered through my research and the data collected through the lockdown playlists and interviews conducted for my study during the early stages of the pandemic.

Another study that falls into this subcategory and research around the COVID-19 pandemic and music is how music and sound became tools for regulating public behaviour and daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic (Gillies et al., 2021). The authors, Richard Gillies and Alexander Gagatsis, discuss the impact of the lockdown and social distancing measures and how this impacted our perception of time connected to the role of music as a way of finding solace and collective connection during this time. This study offers a significant perspective to understand the many ways music served as a coping mechanism and conduit of comfort during a global crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

While my research focuses on individual experiences through in-depth interviews and explores the patterns and narratives in our lockdown playlists, this study broadens the perspective. It extends the scope to understanding the societal dimensions and use of music in daily life during the pandemic.

This study aligns with the themes in my research regarding the use of music to express emotions and its effects on well-being. The study introduces the concept of music and sound as a *place of refuge*, "—a place where time is momentarily suspended allowing one to escape torment and reaffirm one's sense of self, as well as a sense of communal solidarity" (Gagatsis, A. & Gillies, R., 2021, p.03) they aligned this concept to the one DeNora notes about music as "asylum" (DeNora, 2013) that also aligns with my research about music being a place to inhabit and feel better.

The study introduces the "Clap for Carers" phenomenon, focusing on the UK, which   happened in many countries worldwide, including Mexico. It focuses on this act as a communal performance using sound and how it provided a weekly opportunity to feel connected to others in a moment of isolation. However, it also notes that this act uncovered some complexities about being part or not of this performance, highlighting the societal division emerging during these challenging times. This study notes the different dimensions (emotional, social and psychological, to name a few) of music during the pandemic. It highlights the importance of music in the context of a global crisis.

2.5.5 Mental Health, Music, and Cultural Context

Another relevant study for the context of my research by Kola (2021) underscores the pandemic's impact on mental health, especially in individuals from Low and Middle-In- come Countries (LMICs). The study reveals and foresees something we are witnessing now: the consequences of economic stress, job insecurity and social isolation that were already present but hardened during and after the pandemic. Considering that my re- search is focused on the experience of people living in Mexico, a country with significant socioeconomic disparities, this study is important to connect their experiences with the context outlined in this journal.

The study considers the long-term mental health impacts and potential increases in anxiety, stress-related conditions and suicide rates, especially in

LMICs. These findings pro- vide context for the coping strategies the participants and me used, especially concerning music. Bringing this study into this chapter and connecting it to the previous discussion about music as a tool to regulate emotions and the discovery that people who were more affected by the pandemic relied more on music to regulate themselves (Hennessy et al., 2021), it becomes evident that music is a prevalent tool that appears during difficult times, such as the pandemic. I aim to enrich the discussion on the intersection of music, mental health and cultural context within the COVID-19 pandemic, trying to contribute to a broader, comprehensive understanding of this multilayered event.

The COVID-19 pandemic was a challenging time for everyone, and on our way to finding solace, many of us turned to music. These studies highlight the capacity of music and playlists to connect, cope and express complex emotions during crises. As these studies demonstrate, music became an important instrument to cope with an unprecedented historical period. These insights contribute to a broader understanding of music and its impact on an individual and collective level during challenging times.

2.6 Cultural Dimensions of Sadness: *Saudade* and *Tristear*

The concepts of "saudade" and "tristear" will be explored further in Chapter 4, Discussion. These concepts provide insights into how Brazilian and Mexican cultures experience and express emotions, particularly within the intersection of music. Understanding these concepts is helpful to shed light on the connections held between music, emotion, and culture, revealing both individual and collective dimensions of the emotion of sadness.

2.6.1 Understanding Saudade

Saudade is "a Portuguese word that denotes a deep emotional state of melancholic longing for a person, a place, a time, or a thing that is absent" (Paiva, 2022, p.15). The word "saudade" defies any direct translation into other languages, although there are some that get close to its definition.

While words like "añoranza" in Spanish or "longing" in English may capture some aspects of its meaning, they fall short on conveying the deepness and see of longing or nostalgia combined with an emotional state that inhabits the bittersweet. Mixing sandness and longing with melancholy and joy. It is a unique concept, deeply rooted in a cultural expression of memory, loss and yearning for something, or someone that might have never existed.

Even though they share the word, Portuguese and Brazilians inhabit this longing differently. *Saudade* in Portugal leans more into the sense of sorrow, death and suffering. While in Brazil, saudade is experiences with a more joyful mindset despite the sadness and longing (Paiva, 2022). "The Brazilian use of *saudade* involves talk about childhood, about the good moments lived in a certain place, or with a certain person, etc." (Paiva, 2022, p. 34). According to Feldman "Saudade is an emotional state that pervades Brazilian culture and thought. It is an emotional state that is depicted with great depth and sensitivity in Brazilian music, literature and film, as well as in its psychology." (Feldman, 2001, pg. 51) this concept relates to the Mexican concept of *tristear* that will also be used further on in the discussion chapter.

2.6.2 *Tristear*: A Mexican Concept

In contrast to the introspective nature of *saudade*, *tristear* is a uniquely Mexican concept that encapsulates a collective approach to engaging with sadness. Rooted in cultural practices, *tristear* involves actively embodying and sharing sadness within a community. Although *tristear* is not officially recognised by the Real Academia Española (Royal Spanish Academy), where it is merely defined as *estar triste* (being sad), the term carries much deeper connotations within Mexican culture. The closest definition available comes from Mexican writer Ángeles Mastretta, who describes *tristear* as "undoubtedly an irrational attitude, a state of the soul that doesn't necessarily mean being sad. Rather, it is when sadness enters us and begins to act on its own, without our permission." She further elaborates, "*tristear* is forgetting the name of someone you'd like to see. *Tristear* is feeling alone while knowing you are surrounded by people. *Tristear* is not daring to say the word tristeza (sadness)" (Mastretta, 2019).

Despite its unofficial status, *tristear* is documented in the *Diccionario Breve de Mexicanismos* (Brief Dictionary of Mexicanisms) by Guido Gómez de Silva (2001) which underscores its cultural relevance within Mexican culture. *Tristear* embodies the notion that sadness can be inhabited and shared. It goes beyond the simple act of being sad (*estar triste*) to encompass a collective experience of sadness, often lightened by the very act of sharing it. *Tristear* is rarely done alone; even when one is the only person feeling sad in a group, it is something recognised and respected by others. For example, at a social gathering, if you appear less cheerful and someone asks if you are okay, you might respond, *"Estoy tristeando"* (I'm being sad), and they would understand, perhaps offering some comfort or a drink. If another person inquiries about you later, the simple explanation that you are *tristeando* would suffice for them to acknowledge your state and respect your need to inhabit that sadness.

Moreover, *tristear* can also be a collective action. When something affects a community, family, or even something nation or worldwide, people might come together to *tristear*. For instance, a participant in my study, a devoted David Bowie fan, shared that when he passed away, she and her friends gathered to listen to his music, reminisce about his work, and *tristear* his death. *Tristear* is an act of the present, something done in the moment with full awareness and intention.

The concepts of *saudade* and *tristear* offer valuable frameworks for understanding how participants in this study experienced and expressed sadness. While *saudade* provides a lens for examining how Brazilian culture navigate a blend of nostalgia and melancholy through music, *tristear* highlights a Mexican approach to actively embodying and sharing sadness within a communal context. These frameworks are important in the upcoming discussion in Chapter 4, where I will explore how the participants and I engaged with these emotions through music.

2.7 Summary and Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter explored a constellation of literature relevant for my re- search, delving into three themes: the elements that can be used to create a playlist, the significance of music as an instrument of connection and the way the COVID-19 pandemic intersects with music and our well-being. This chapter uncovered different insights into how music and playlists can be powerful tools in both individual and collective ways. To construct identities, regulate emotions and create connections with others. It also highlighted the sociocultural and psychological dimensions of playlists and songs, noting their role in creating social connections and deepening existing relationships. Furthermore, the last section of the chapter delved into literature that researched the impact the COVID-19 crisis brought to everyone, the trauma it caused and keeps on causing and how music emerged as a way to express complex emotions, seek solace and maintain a sense of connection during isolation.

The compilation of these studies makes clear that music, and playlists, can create a bridge between social and cultural moments like the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, these themes are not isolated but intersect with one another. Creating a playlist, which can initially be considered a personal task, is ultimately a dynamic process connected with the creation of self, emotional regulation and the desire to connect with others. Moreover, when shared and created with others (or the perceived idea of others), they become social objects that contain connections and desires. Furthermore, during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, music emerged as a tool of resilience, self-expression and solace.

Nonetheless, some gaps remain despite the rich insights provided by the literature in this chapter. At the same time, I found literature that outlined the "what" and "why" of the process of creating a playlist, there is still room for exploring the "how" in deeper detail. My research addresses these gaps by noting and focusing on the details behind the selection of songs to create a playlist, offering insights into the processes, emotions, internal logic and narratives behind creating a playlist within the context of living through the

COVID-19 lockdown.

The knowledge compiled in this chapter serves as a foundation for the context of my research and its endeavours. The insights I gathered from the existing studies helped me inform and shape my research. Through having a better understanding of how music and playlists are relevant sociocultural instruments that played a role in our well-being during the COVID-19 lockdown, it is easier to comprehend the importance of the complex experiences and stories behind my participants' playlists (and mine)

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will discuss the research design, including the evolution of the project from the starting point to its adaptation due to the unfolding pandemic. The ever-changing circumstances posed challenges that required adaptability and flexibility to ensure that my fieldwork was conducted in the best possible way. Additionally, I also elaborate on the recruitment process and the tools used to ensure a diverse range of participants contributing with their lockdown stories. I will provide insights into the method chosen for reaching participants from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The following 14 sections give insight into the methodologies employed in the research. This chapter provides an overview of the research design, participant recruitment and sampling strategies, research methods employed, participant introductions, ethical considerations, and data analysis procedures. Section 3.2 discusses the methodology's design and framework. Section 3.3 outlines the autoethnography approach to data analysis. Section 3.4 discusses the research questions. Section 3.5 is about the participant's recruitment and sampling. At the same time, the research methods, expanding on narrative interviews, the use of playlists as music elicitation, and the journal I used to reflect on the interviews and fieldwork, in general, are discussed in Section 3.6. 3.7 delves into the ethical considerations, like participant confidentiality, informed consent, and other elements around this subject. Section 3.8 presents the participants, delving into their demographics and different collectives. Section 3.9 introduces the interview pilot, including adjustments made after initial interviews. Section 3.10 delves into the first interviews and adjustments, while 3.11 discusses the interview methodology. 3.12 expands on the structure of the interviews, and 3.13 discusses conducting the interviews. Section 3.14 delves into the data analysis and how my personal experience of the lockdown played an important role in filtering and analysing the interviews and playlists. Section 3.14 concludes the chapter, summarising the relevant points discussed throughout the

methodology.

3.2 Research Design and Framework

As mentioned briefly in Chapter 1, this project was first planned for a very different goal when creating the outline to follow. It had to be updated as a response to the pandemic in early 2020.

Therefore, the initial project sought to study playlists as a means of fostering a sense of belonging and community in the sub-used parks of Mexico City's neighbourhoods. I had intended to return to Mexico for a minimum of three months to conduct my fieldwork and facilitate a series of workshops in various neighbourhoods as part of the study. However, everything changed when the coronavirus pandemic materialised as a genuine threat. As a security measure, the university indefinitely prohibited any travel related to academic research.

Consequently, the planning of my fieldwork had to be paused immediately. It became apparent that the fieldwork, which was the crucial component of the research, would not be possible for an indefinite time. As a direct consequence the research as planned needed to be changed on a deep level for me to continue my research. Direct contact with participants was no longer an option, and travelling to Mexico was on indefinite pause, so everything related to data collection and the methodologies to pursue them had to be considered through online platforms. The liminal space between me knowing these new instructions and thinking through another way where my research could still be doable was a very stressful period but also one that allowed me to put all my creative potential to harness the best of outcomes in a context of such uncertainty.

While we were already on lockdown at the end of March 2020, I was trying to come up with a way that the main interest of my research, playlists as a tool of storytelling linked to the collective, could keep the essence even if it needed to be changed on a structural level. For a couple of weeks, that seemed impossible until I thought about how playlists could be a tool to express the experience of confinement and collective contingency in Mexico City.

After some thoughts and reflection, I pondered the potential of playlists as a tool to tell the stories behind the experience of the lockdown in Mexico City. Moreover, I considered how this could contribute to understanding this significant period as well as the notion that playlists have the ability to narrate various stories and evoke diverse emotions. We were all uncertain about what would happen in the upcoming months. However, I was already using music to self-regulate and process my emotions. Through conversations with family and friends and observations on social media, I could sense that I was not the only one feeling this way after discussing with my supervisors the new approach for the research and receiving guidance on how to approach and what to reflect on before re-doing the research design again.

While planning the new research project, I had to be mindful of the high level of uncertainty I faced due to the pandemic context in which my research was conducted. In retrospect, one of the most valuable pieces of advice given to me by my supervisors was to maintain an open mindset regarding the findings that would emerge from the interviews and data gathering. Staying flexible and adaptable to the demands of the research was crucial in ensuring its feasibility and progress during this adaptation phase.

Based on my previous research for the original project, I was aware that recent literature on playlists primarily centred around individual playlists, focusing on themes such as identity (e.g. Rochow, 2010 and Harris, 2020), curation practice (Dhaenens & Burgess, 2018), or emotion regulation and connection (e.g. Daughtry, 2014 and Maloney, 2021).

When I initially planned this new research outcome, I was unsure how the research landscape responded to the pandemic. However, I was certain that much new research was on its way. While it was exciting to be part of the who would create new knowledge about this subject, my main concern and focus for the research was not solely on the pandemic itself; this was the background context. My primary focus was to explore using playlists as a narrative tool during challenging times. Previous research has shown that

music can be a conduit for individual and collective emotions during crises or channelling events, such as the attacks on September 11th, 2001, in the United States (Forman, M. 2002).

Given that my research approach shifted due to the pandemic and personal circum- stances already discussed in Chapter 1, the research approach's strength lay in the ability to capture real and meaningful experiences as they unfolded, navigating this research process in an adaptative and intuitive manner. My goal was to provide an inside perspective into how we used music and playlists to navigate this critical moment. The priority was to ensure the rigour of my research despite all the challenges.

To recruit participants for my study, I used the online platforms of Instagram and Facebook, and referrals from previous participants (Section 3.4). From November 2020 to February 2021, I conducted interviews with 25 participants, who identified as trans- gender women, cis women and cis men ranging from 21 to 43 years old (a section with all the participants and their relevant information can be found on section 3.7 of this chapter). I used open-ended narrative structure influenced by Connelly (1990) and Kartch (2018) to ensure participants felt safe to share their experiences however they preferred it. I incorporated Music Elicitation based on the approach by Levell (2019), using playlists to encourage active participation. These Playlists were created in diverse formats, such as online (Spotify, iTunes, YouTube), digital (Notes app on their phones) or analogue (a list written on paper). The interviews and playlist provided a medium for participants to articulate their experiences of their lockdown. For more details on the research methods employed, please referred to section

3.3. Autoethnography approach into the data analysis

Adding Autoethnography to analyse my data and into my research process allowed me to navigate all the complexities of the pandemic and how it has impacted my life and the participant's lives. Seeing the interviews through this lens deepened my connection to the narratives and enriched my analysis.

I understood our interactions while sharing their playlists, and I bearing witness to their stories were both part of a collective narrative of our pandemic experience. This autoethnographic approach allowed me to immerse myself in our experience through their stories and mine instead of trying to keep myself on the other side.

One of the many things I have in common with the participants, besides my country of origin and culture, is a strong connection to music to process emotions and meaningful experiences. We intuitively resorted to music to navigate the lockdown experience, and we used music as a bridge to connect with others, to ground us and make sense of our sense of self in challenging times. This shared connection -the role of music in our lives, allowed a deeper understanding between us, which resonated with the research's focus on the role of music during lockdown.

Autoethnography proved to be an effective approach to processing the data analysis. At the same time, it allowed me to reclaim my agency and position myself in the research in a way that felt genuine and aligned with it, especially my participants. Besides being from the same country and having the experience of going through this pandemic, participants and I shared our love for music and its relevance in our everyday lives. So, for us, making sense of our quarantine experience through music was something we were doing, often subconsciously or semi-intentionally.

As noted by Huges, Autoethnography stands out from other perspectives since it allows authors to situate themselves in different contexts, a dimension often off-limits to conventional qualitative research methodologies (Huges, 2017). I spent several hours researching autoethnography (*Etnografías afectivas y autoetnografía*, 2022) and its different uses in an academic context. I found an approach and a voice that were in tune with the way I wanted to process my participant's playlist while not having to deny my experience of the lockdown.

Some authors helped me convey and be empowered in my identity as a source

of knowledge, my grief process as a learning tool towards kindness and reclaiming my agency, using autoethnography in their studies, I found a guide that was still into the academic realm but convey more empathy for emotions and affective subjects.

As Spry (2001) noted in her study about performing autoethnography and discussing the potential of autoethnographic performance: "Allowed me to position myself as active agent with narrative authority over many hegemonising dominant cultural myths that restricted my social freedom and personal development" (Spry, 2001. p.711). It was the same with other works that weaved Autoethnography and complex subjects such as grief. I remember reflecting on the healing aspect of reading Kivinen's academic work on grief, showing her vulnerability while embodying agency in her experience by telling us about it. In her study on grief and autoethnography, she describes her process:

"I wrote and I cried. I cried and I wrote. The writing relieved me for a moment, but these past few months I have carried my grief closer to my heart. It has laid heavy on my chest and prevented me from physically moving."
(Kivinen, 2020 p.500)

Or Bochner reflecting on his saying goodbye to his terminally ill mother while in parallel telling the 9/11 terrorist attacks centering kindness and empathy in the story in his work "Love survives" (Bochner, 2002) or using Autoethnography as a first-person narrative on gender violence and her process to reclaiming agency and collective empowerment (Silba, 2016). Autoethnography sets the space that allows me to sit still and connect with my experience and feelings, reflecting on my reality and what I have gone through. When I stopped hiding myself, the part of me that was going through all the different challenges while doing this research hat was remarkably close to my experience, I felt as if an incredible weight lifted and made it easier for me to find connections with my participant's stories.

3.4 Research Questions

This section outlines the research questions that guided the exploration of the use of music playlists to narrate the COVID-19 lockdown experience among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow.

My study aims to enhance the understanding of how music playlists can serve as tools for expression, reflection, and connection during periods of isolation and uncertainty. How the act of sharing the process of creating the playlist and the playlist itself can reveal the ways we cope with challenging times using music as a tool and how the act of sharing the process behind the creation of the playlists and the music on the playlist with someone else can help us process challenging times, such as the pandemic.

3.4.1 Research Question 1: How did participants in Mexico City—and I, in Glasgow—create playlists specifically for the research study to reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown?

This question focuses on the process behind the creation of playlists curated specifically for the research study. All of the participant's playlists, except one that had already started before knowing about the interview, were created as an aim for the research and the interview. It focuses on understanding how participants in Mexico City, alongside myself in Glasgow, approached the task of curating playlists to reflect on their personal experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. How participants engaged in the process of curating their lockdown playlist, and the selection of songs holds a personal meaning. The act of reflecting and creating these playlists (the titles, use of art, number of songs, among others) served as a means of self-reflection and connecting with the one that would be listening to this playlist, in this case, me and anyone else they choose to share their playlists with. It also helped them to gain insights into their journeys during their pandemic experience. This question aims to find out the role of playlists as a medium for expression and reflection during this time.

This question focuses on the participants' intentions when they first gather the idea of creating a playlist that tells their experience of the lockdown, song selection criteria, and personal reflections that informed their creation. The creation of these playlists was not merely about selecting songs but was a means of constructing a narrative that encapsulates the emotional and experiential aspects of their lockdown experiences. Focusing on this will give me an insight into the commonalities I could find in the way the 25 participants and myself created the playlists and how we all used music in a similar or different way.

3.4.2 Research Question 2: What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow?

This research question explores the dialogues that emerged from sharing and discussing the playlists created for this study. An important aspect of this inquiry is understanding how these dialogues that emerged during the interviews might create a channel for connection, empathy, and mutual support. the reflections and sharing about the stories behind the playlists, this question seeks to understand if the exchanges that the playlist facilitate through conversation could foster a deeper reflection and shared understanding of challenging moments such as the lockdown experience.

The methodology included in-depth narrative interviews (Mueller, 2019) and music elicitation techniques (dos Santos & Wagner, 2018; Hazel et al., 2020). These methods enabled participants to articulate their experiences and the narratives behind their playlists, serving as a bridge for deeper dialogue and understanding.

The question aims to explore how these dialogues fostered empathy, connection, and a shared sense of company during a very isolated time, contributing to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the lockdown experience for both the participants and myself.

3.4.3 Research Question 3: How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?

This question explores the role that both the creation of playlists and the subsequent dialogue played in aiding participants and myself to process and make sense of our pandemic experiences. The combined activities of playlist creation and dialogue acted as tools for emotional and cognitive processing, offering a means for participants to reflect on their experiences, articulate their feelings, and connect with others (Hughes & Pennington, 2017). This reflective and expressive process is critical to understanding how the participants and myself coped with the emotions we experienced during the COVID-19 lockdown. This question seeks to highlight the potential use of music and conversation as mechanisms for navigating and comprehending the impact of challenging situations like the pandemic on personal and collective levels.

The research questions outlined in this section underpin the core of the study aim to learn how music playlists and the dialogues elicited from sharing and reflecting on them, served as tools for expression, reflection, and connection during the COVID-19 lockdown. Research Question 1 delves into the creative process behind playlist construction, revealing how participants in Mexico City and I in Glasgow used song selection to narrate our lockdown experiences and express personal meanings. Research Question 2 investigates the dialogues that emerged from sharing and discussing these playlists, highlighting how such interactions created a space for empathy and mutual support. Finally, Research Question 3 explores how the combined activities of playlist creation and dialogue facilitated emotional and cognitive processing, providing insights into how music and conversation contributed to our understanding and coping with the pandemic's impact.

The following table illustrates the alignment between the research questions (RQ) and the related KFs (KF)

Table 3.1 Research Questions (RQs) and related Key Findings (KFs)

Research Question (RQ)	Key Finding (KF)
RQ1: How did participants in Mexico City—and I, in Glasgow—create playlists specifically for the research study to reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown?	KF1: Playlist Creation Process as Reflective Storytelling
RQ2: What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow?	KF2: Connection, Empathy, and Transformative Power of Sharing Playlists
RQ3: How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?	KF3: Bearing Witness to the Lockdown Experience
RQ3: How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?	KF4: Playlists as Maps of Emotional Spaces: Intersections of Music, Lockdown Experiences, and Emotional Landscapes

3.5 Participant Recruitment and Sampling

In this section, I will discuss the strategies I used to engage participants, and the techniques used to reach a varied participant scope, contributing to a thorough exploration of the research themes.

As explained before, there was a fundamental shift in the approach of recruitment. With the need for online engagement as the only viable tool for data collection, the traditional fieldwork model transformed. The recruitment process was then designed to harness the reach and connectivity of social media platforms. One of the platforms considered was Instagram, which integrated visual storytelling and personal connection. I had observed that people on Instagram were already sharing their songs and playlists since the beginning of the pandemic and throughout its evolution.

3.5.1 Instagram Recruitment

The initial recruitment strategy involved Instagram, where I used a meme to attract potential participants (Appendix 3, p.230). The meme (featured a comparison of two different-coloured houses, known as the *sherbert homes* or the *two coloured houses* meme. Where there is a pink-like-barbie house next to another all-black gothic-like house, each with a text saying, "my music playlist" and "also my music playlist". I chose this meme to focus on the diversity in personal musical preferences and make the study more approachable. The meme was posted on my Instagram stories, along with an invitation for individuals who were interested in music and playlist creation to participate in the study. This approach targeted my existing follower base, which consisted mainly of creative individuals, including those engaged in various artistic and academic fields. The majority of my followers were in between late 20's and beginning of 40's and included a significant proportion of queer Mexicans and Latin Americans, many of whom I knew personally or through social media interactions.

The target of the participants was people over 18 years old and competent to consent to the research. Aiming for a more straightforward and clear engagement, I refrained from providing a detailed explanation of the project. Instead, I simply requested interested individuals to contact me through direct message if they were interested in sharing their quarantine experience and enjoyed creating playlists and listening to music. Once contact was established, I provided a detailed explanation of the research project, including the purpose, expectations, and consent process.

3.5.2 Facebook recruitment

A second approach was taken via Facebook. Instead of posting the invitation on my personal page, I asked for the help of my flatmate at the moment, Maria. She was pursuing a master's degree in children's literature and was for Mexico too. She uploaded the invitation to various Facebook groups she was a part of. I chose not to upload the invitation on my Facebook page to reach people from different backgrounds and contexts than mine. This strategy effectively reached a younger demographic, including students studying literature at different stages of their academic careers. This audience was distinct from my Instagram followers and provided fresh perspectives on the study's themes.

3.5.3 Referral or Snowball process

Another approach was the participants I received referrals from other participants who may be interested in being involved. I then approached them using the same protocol as the other participants. All interview samples and information given to the participants were approved by the Ethics committee at the University of Glasgow, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. This approach allowed for the inclusion of additional voices and perspectives, further diversifying the participant group. Referrals helped expand the reach of the study beyond my immediate social circles and provided an opportunity to engage with individuals who might not have been reached through the initial recruitment strategies.

3.6 Research Methods

The research used data collection methods designed to capture the complexity and different experiences of the participants during the COVID-19 Lockdown in Mexico City. These methods were intentionally chosen and planned to ensure that participants felt safe and at ease during the interviews. The study used Narrative Interviews, Music Elicitation and a Fieldwork Journal to collect data. The participants were asked to create a playlist (music elicitation tool) that represented their experience of the lockdown before the interviews. During the Narrative Interviews, we talked about the playlists and the memories, emotions and experiences each song represented for them. In addition, I maintained a journal to document my thoughts, notes and reflections during fieldwork. Through these methodological approaches, the study seeks to learn more about the role of music as a channel of self-expression within the context of the pandemic.

3.6.1 Narrative Interviews

For my research methodology, after thorough research and carefully considering various interview methods, I chose narrative interviews as the most suitable approach because of their capacity to enable participants to become narrators of their own stories (Con- nelly M., 1990; Kartch, F., 2018). I opted for this approach to give participants the necessary space and agency to share their lockdown experiences as safely and authentically as possible. According to Kartch (2018), narrative interviewing involves generating a story through the interview process. Unlike structured or semi-structured qualitative inter- views, the emphasis is not on the question-answer format but on the participant's free- dom and ability to tell their experience (Kartch, F., 2018).

In these interviews, the roles shift from interviewer-interviewee to narrator-listener, granting participants greater freedom and space to express their perspectives and recount their stories based on personal experiences. With this approach, the participants had more freedom to talk about their experience and direct the subjects at their best consideration, with agency

about their opinions and stories.

I planned the research methods for June 2020 and worked with the ethics reviews in July to address the concerns of the reviewer's committee. I will address this subject in depth in the section about Ethical Considerations (Section 3.5) of this chapter. This process involved multiple rounds of edits, thoroughly considering the potential consequences and scenarios. This process of deep reflection prepared me well for any crises my participants might face, especially since we were venturing into uncharted territories during the pandemic. I received approval from the Ethics committee at the beginning of August. I will provide more details on obtaining Ethical Approval in the Ethical Consideration segment of this chapter.

The interviews were planned to be open-ended, initially covering broad themes such as the longing of a place and the experience of confinement. However, during the interview pilot (Section 3.8) and throughout the subsequent interviews, the focus shifted towards their personal stories connected to the experience of the lockdown.

Using narrative interviews as the method tool helped provide a safe space for participants to share their experiences during a context full of uncertainty. Choosing to prioritise active listening and being mindful during each interview was a way to allow every participant to tell their story in their unique way. Participants became the narrators and guides of their journey through their lockdown experience. This approach allowed me to pay attention to one of the most important reasons for the research since the beginning: going beyond solely data collection and centring their stories and connections as the core values of my research. Furthermore, the challenges I went through along the time- line of the interviews shaped how I approached them, giving me a sense of empathy when being present for the participant's narratives.

3.6.2 Music Elicitation : Harnessing the Creative Power of Playlists

One essential part of my methodology was using the 'music elicitation' tool; I selected this tool because it encourages active involvement from the

participants. Music elicitation is a creative technique rooted in an art-based enquiry. It focuses on the participant's faculty to "express meaning embedded in the historical, cultural, and biographical contexts of their lives" (Levell, 2011, p. 31). I selected music elicitation as a tool for the interviews because previous studies have shown effective results among the different art inquiry methods, particularly concerning music and biographical narratives or experiences.

The literature in music elicitation offers various approaches that work differently depending on the research requirements. It has been effectively in research about migration (Rovetta Cortés, 2020), memories (Woodward et al., A. 2017) and peace building (Rodríguez-Sánchez et al., 2018) to name some fields, showing its efficacy within other art inquiry methods.

The use of music elicitation as a tool within narrative interviews has been shown to be effective before. A study focused on the narratives of men who endured domestic violence and abuse during childhood and self-identified as involved with gangs; in this research, participants shared their stories through sharing music (Levell, 2019). Levell explains in their study that using music elicitation as a tool for the participants to tell their stories was helpful to help them rely on the music and the visual (when the participants show videos instead of tracks) to explain the complicated emotions and experiences they lived (Levell, 2019).

Incorporating music elicitation within my research involved requesting participants to compile a playlist or bring a playlist they already had that encapsulated their lockdown journey to the interview. This way, they would have time to reflect on their experience and connect them with songs and themes in the way they prefer. We would schedule a date for the interview, having in mind the process of the playlist beforehand, so they would take their time without any rush to create it and share it with me. Following Levell's insight in their study suggested that participants had the opportunity to contemplate the music they wanted to share before the interview, which gave them agency to think about the contribution to the interview (Levell, 2019). Therefore, asking the participants to create the playlist ahead of our interviews was aligned to give them the time and space to process their

experiences, connect with the songs and entire playlists and reflect on all they wanted to share with me.

The guidelines I gave them to create the playlists aimed to be as simple as possible; the only requirements were that their playlists should consist of five to ten songs representing their lockdown experience. They were free to interpret the last requirement however they chose, and any interpretation was acceptable. I also emphasised that any for- mat was acceptable, considering I did not know what would be easier and more accessible for them.

Four participants used pen and paper or notes on their app phones. The rest used online platforms, such as YouTube, iTunes and Spotify. Participants were also given the choice to bring a playlist they already had created under the subject of lockdown. However, just one participant brought one they were already working on to the interview.

3.6.3 Journal and Self-Reflection

During the interview process, I used a journal to note all the questions, reflections, thoughts and ideas I had during and after the interviews. In it, I had many insights and ideas that helped greatly, especially when returning to my notes while making sense of the data.

In parallel, I was also doing a "quarantine diary". Within this journal, I drew and wrote down everything meaningful to me throughout the lockdown period. This journal served as a means for expressing and nurturing my artistic and creative aspects, an outlet to alchemise my thoughts, fears and hopes. Later on, when the loss of my mum happened, I created a "Grief Journal", in which I wrote every day for at least fifteen minutes to process her loss. Furthermore, I did the same when my dad passed away, documenting my breakfasts every day for two weeks since his death. The latest part was selected as an art piece to be featured in a book titled "Love and Chaos" for an Art Gallery in Glasgow.

Writing and illustrating it all was a way to ground myself. I now realise that the journals were my first nudge into using Autoethnography in this research. Like many of the tools I employed during fieldwork, they were born out of necessity and served as an organic way to make sense of my reality and, subsequently, my research. About reflecting on my lockdown experience through words and drawings, I strongly relate to Leitch's autoethnographic work about finding one's voice in academia. Leitch highlights the importance of transforming somatic and visceral reactions into tangible expressions such as words or images. She acknowledges that this practice has served as a survival kit for maintaining her well-being (Leitch, 2006), a reflection that resonates with my journey during this research and lockdown.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

This section will discuss the Ethical guidelines that the study followed, focusing on specific vital aspects. I had to obtain ethical approval from the College Research *Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research involving Human Participants/Data* of the University of Glasgow. This process involved submitting an ethics application that took several rounds to be approved until it got its final form, considering the recommended amendments from the committee. This process was carefully created, prioritising safeguarding the participants who agreed to share their experiences with me.

The number of participants is 25, and they were selected based on the demographic age range of 21 to 50 years old, including cisgender women, transgender women and cis-gender men. The interviews were conducted with them located in Mexico City. Before obtaining informed consent from the participants, I provided them with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix 2, p.228). This document was designed to clearly explain the research study, how they would be involved in it, and what their participation would involve. The Participant Information Sheet contained information about the purpose of the study, what the study aimed to explore about playlists and lockdown experience in Mexico City, what would be required from the participants during the interviews, and what their contribution to the research would be. It also provided an overview of the research objectives and the participant's

role, emphasising the voluntary nature of the collaboration. The document encouraged them to ask for any clarifications or questions about the study or the process they might have. I provided them with my and my supervisor's emails in case they wanted to contact them. All of this was to ensure they were clearly informed about the research and their involvement in it.

Participants were required to fill out and sign a Consent Form. The form and the Information Sheet were sent to them, and I asked them to send them before the interview. This form was designed for the participants to have a complete understatement of the terms of their participation. This document emphasised that their participation was voluntary, and they could withdraw from the research at any point during the interview without providing any reason. Additionally, in the document, I asked for their permission to record the video call to have a comprehensive record of our conversation. However, they were given the option to have the interview without recording them, respecting their privacy preferences. To ensure their anonymity, they were informed about their identities being protected and that I would use pseudonyms in my research. The consent form was an important part of obtaining the participant's well-informed collaboration in the research, including the handling and using of their data. It allowed them to make an informed decision about being part of the research.

Due to the nature of the research, exploring the subject of the pandemic while we were still in lockdown working with the topic of COVID-19 was considered a potentially sensitive topic, given that the participants would be sharing personal experiences and reflections about their lockdown. As part of planning the fieldwork, I developed a proactive strategy to manage complex situations in case of participant distress. I ensured I considered the possibility of any participant experiencing distress and knew beforehand how to react. I asked for the advice of a therapist back in Mexico who was working with many patients regarding the stress of COVID-19 and the lockdown. She recommended that in case the participant started showing signs of distress, I remained calm and suggested a break and a change of topic for a moment and gave the choice of finishing the interview and having the rest another time.

I read the procedures and guidelines provided by 'Playlists for Life', an organisation working with music playlists for well-being and dementia. They considered that some songs could be "Red Flag Songs" (Playlists for life, 2023), meaning these songs can trigger or evoke distress, and this will prompt a pause for emotional support. In case a participant tears up during an interview, I was conscious to assess the situation in a way that ensures their well-being. Additionally, a list of support organisations specialising in mental health and well-being, tailored for potential COVID-19 situations, was prepared in case participants needed further assistance.

3.8 Introducing the participants

I conducted 25 interviews during the fieldwork that underwent between November 2020 and February 2021. The interviewees ranged from 21 to 43 years of age. They identified as transgender woman and cisgender women and men, located in different districts of Mexico City. The following is a table providing an overview of the participants and some relevant details.

Table 3.2 Overview of Participants and Relevant Information

	Name	Occupation	Age	Gender Identity
1	Ari	Literature Student	21	Woman
2	Fabia	Literature Student	22	Woman
3	Manuel	Literature Student	22	Man
4	Mauro	Teacher	28	Man
5	Ramiro	Media Production	29	Man
6	Mario	Visual Artist	29	Man
7	Maya	ONG	29	Woman
8	Andrea	Music Journalist and Producer	34	Woman
9	Agustin	Musician	33	Man
10	Pablo	-	33	Man
11	Mar	Creative	31	Woman
12	Samuel	Economist	31	Man
13	Nere	Activist and Performer	32	Woman
14	Eve	Event Planner	35	Woman
15	Hector	Highschool Teacher	35	Man
16	Dane	Activist	35	Woman
17	Emilio	Lawyer	36	Man
18	Carlos	Care Work	36	Man
19	Elvira	Artist	37	Woman
20	Pablo	-	37	Man

21	Lala	Copywriter	38	Woman
22	Fernando	Teacher	38	Man
23	Alicia	Content Writer	40	Woman
24	Rafa	High school and University Teacher	43	Man
25	Isa	Writer and English Teacher	47	Woman

3.8.1 Demographics of the Participant Group

The demographic characteristics of the participant group were shaped by the nature of my follower base, creative connections, and the online engagement strategies I employed.

Demographic Breakdown

a) **Age Range:** Participants primarily ranged from their early 20s to early 40s, reflecting the typical age distribution within the online platforms used. This window of age group often engages with digital media and music culture, making them a relevant demographic for this study.

b) **Gender Identity and Sexual Orientation**: The participant group included transgender women, cisgender women, and cisgender men, with a significant portion identifying as LGBTQ+. This aligns with my own queer identity and my engagement with queer and art communities, both through personal connections and professional work as a visual artist and writer. Consequently, my social media network naturally reflects these shared identities, which influenced the recruitment process and the demographic of the participants. The predominance of queer participants highlighted how music and playlists played a role in community building and emotional expression within marginalised groups, particularly during challenging times.

c) **Cultural Background:** Most participants were Mexican and Latin American, which aligns with both the regional focus of my research and my personal identity as a Mexican. This shared identity has contributed to the rapport and relevance of the study, particularly in exploring how music and playlists are used within these cultural contexts during the pandemic

d) **Professional and Creative Backgrounds:** Many participants were involved in artistic or creative fields, such as writing, photography, and other forms of art. These affiliations contributed to the richness

of the data collected, as participants often used music and playlists both as personal coping mechanisms and extensions of their creative practices. The creative backgrounds of many participants influenced how they used music and playlists during the pandemic. For them, music was not just a form of personal solace but also a creative expression and a tool for community building.

3.9 Interview Pilot

Before starting the interview phase, I conducted a pilot study to fine-tune the interview process. The pilot study started with an interview that set the foundation for under- standing the participants' lockdown experiences and playlists. This interview included some open-ended questions for guidance, aiming to prompt answers that could reveal connections between music and the lockdown experience.

For the pilot, I chose a friend originally from Mexico City but currently living in Glasgow. I considered that choosing someone with a similar cultural background as me and the people I was going to interview would be beneficial for gaining insights into the interview approach. The interview questions were open-ended and semi-structured allowing for flexibility and depth. I took detailed notes on her responses and the interaction, noting any moments where the participant struggled to respond or where the conversation flowed particularly well.

The feedback I obtained from the pilot study was important to refine the interview process. Some observations helped me improve the interviews. For instance, I noticed my friend became more nervous if I asked directly about a song and why she chose it instead of asking her more indirect questions, like how many times she had listened to it during the lockdown. I also noticed that at the beginning, she seemed nervous about explaining the songs "in the right way" instead of the way she felt more comfortable.

In response, I adjusted the interview to be more organic and participant-centred. I would start with some light conversation and ask participants how they have been during the pandemic before guiding the conversation to the

subject of their playlists and assuring them that everything they told me was valuable. From the pilot, I also realised that some participants might need more time to prepare emotionally to talk about certain songs or experiences, particularly the ones that involved grief or other loneliness. Another key insight from the pilot was the importance of ensuring that the participant feels comfortable while sharing with me these potentially triggering topics. Hence, I adjusted my approach to incorporate more active listening and empathetic feedback during the conversation. This created a more natural and supportive dialogue, which would be critical for the full interviews.

3.10 First interviews and adjustments

I developed a general outline for the interviews, which gave space for flexibility to include any spontaneous topics and questions based on what the participant shared with me. To ensure a secure and comfortable environment, at the beginning of each interview I greeted the participants and made sure they knew they could pause or end the interview at any time. At the end of the interview, I would ask if they had anything else to share that hasn't been considered during the interview and if they have any questions for me. Frequently, they asked me about the project in general and/or about the development of the pandemic in Glasgow and the UK, in general.

After the notes and improvement, I had with the pilot interview, I wrote a basic guideline for the interviews based on specific questions I wanted to address. However, as I started talking with the first couple of participants, I realised their stories had many layers, and they were willing to discuss them with me. I considered that perhaps the structure of the questions I had prepared was, in some ways, limiting what they wanted to share. After the first two interviews, I shifted my approach and listened more attentively to what they were sharing, making space for them to guide the interview. In every interview, it felt like entering a forest that I only knew by name, but they knew by heart. They were the experts, and I considered the best thing to do was to follow their lead. This approach gave us more freedom to deepen their stories and allowed me to focus on their narratives and experiences.

When needed, I would sometimes stop into a specific song or experience I

considered relevant for the study but then I would step back follow the path they decided to go from there. This approach helped both participants and I, gain a better understanding of how they experienced the lockdown and how music played an essential role in their lockdown experience.

3.11 Interview Methodology

The interviews were designed using a semi-structured format, which allowed me to balance guiding the conversation with the flexibility to adapt to participants' unique experiences. This approach was intentional, as I aimed to create a participant-centred environment where individuals could lead the discussion in ways that felt most comfortable for them. The questions served as prompts, but I encouraged participants to share their thoughts, stories, and reflections freely, which often resulted in rich and unexpected insights.

A unique trait of this approach was that my role was not only as the interviewer but also that I was someone who shared many of the same experiences as the participants, particularly in terms of isolation and loss during the pandemic. Having lost my parents and dealing with similar emotional struggles, I was able to engage with the participants on a deeper level, one that fostered mutual empathy.

Regarding the process of preparing for each interview, I would take at least half an hour beforehand to be alone. I would engage in either a 15-minute free-style dance routine or meditation. This practice helped me enter a grounded and open mindset, knowing that participants might share challenging experiences related to their song choices and the pandemic. I was aware that their stories could resonate with or trigger some of my own struggles, so it was important for me to be fully present and grounded, enabling me to bear witness to their narratives with care and empathy.

This preparation created a dynamic where the interviews moved on from the basic questioning and took on elements of dialogue, where participants felt curiosity about my lockdown experience and my openness encouraged them to ask me questions about my experience too. This give-and-take relationship was significant because it facilitated deeper connections and understanding.

Participants often expressed joy for the opportunity to discuss their experiences in a way that felt heard and validated. The interview structure, therefore, became a space for mutual support, allowing for empathy and reflective exchanges that enhanced the richness of the data collected.

All these changes related to the pandemic were not exclusive to me; people's lives were changing at a core level across the globe. My experiences, in a way, gave me another layer of insight into the pandemic. I approached the interviews with sensitivity and awareness, understanding that the participants were also facing their unique hardships. As a consequence, I centred empathy and kindness as the guidelines of the interviews so the participants could feel safe to share their experience with all the complexities it contained.

I made sure to prepare mentally before conducting each interview. Knowing we were all struggling at different levels during the lockdown, I knew the interviews could be emotionally challenging, so I would have a cup of coffee alone or listen to music that would help me relax and put me in a good mind space. I knew my grief was still taking a big toll on me, and it could come and go easily without my control, so I was aware of how I was feeling and checked if it would be okay for me to do the interviews, to ensure that I was able to listen to the participants as they deserved. Since I was conducting interviews across a different time zone (Mexico is 6 hours behind the UK), I had to work during my night-time for some weeks, around 7 pm to 2 am. Hence, I made sure to rest as much as possible to stay healthy and in the right mindset during this time.

3.12 Structure of the interviews

The structure of the interviews was quite simple. First, I would start with a simple question about how they were doing and setting the starting point. I would also inquire if they had any questions and remind them that they could ask anything and take breaks at any time, and we could also stop at any moment and continue the interview another time. Once they confirmed they had read the information form, I would ask if they were ready to begin. I would start the formal interview by giving the participants the option to choose how they want to begin. They could tell me about their experience

during lockdown, share their thoughts about the playlist, or choose a song to start the interview with. Most participants usually chose a song. Generally, the first song from the playlist and then started from there.

As mentioned before, I would ask some questions, from time to time, about the meaning of a particular song or emotions associated with a specific experience. I would take notes and save some questions until the end to maintain the flow of their stories. These remaining questions would primarily focus on the experience of creating playlists and the emotions they felt during the process. I would also ask about their general experience of the lockdown and the pandemic's impact on their local context and neighbourhoods.

3.13 Conducting and analysing the interviews

Interviews meant connecting with others. While doing the interviews, I gave myself permission to put my feelings and thoughts aside to tune in to my participants' stories. During 45 minutes to 2 hours at least three times a week, I would engage with participants and feel honoured to engage in their stories, their reflections, the music they listened to navigate the lockdown, and the reasons behind it, and their overall experience of the pandemic. I now know that these moments helped me keep myself together during one of the most challenging times of my life. They helped me understand that I was not going through this alone. Talking with them about their fears and hopes, and seeing myself reflected in them, grounded me. Moreover, it helped me feel connected with my culture. The interviews were in Spanish, and sharing space with them was healing for me and helpful while trying to navigate everything.

Some of the participants also lost friends or family during the pandemic; I talked with them about navigating their loved ones' sickness in Mexico. It was strange for us, as a culture used to dealing with death and grief in a collective manner. Their experiences resonated with me and made me feel closer to my culture than ever before. It was one of the most relatable conversations about loss I had in months.

I completed conducting the interviews at the end of February 2021. Then, I listened to each interview, made notes, and transcribed them. Afterwards, I

reflected on the interviews and considered the relevant portions that could contribute to the study. I then translated those segments accordingly. The process was long, time-consuming, and exhausting, which I did not realise only in hindsight. I was deeply affected by intense grief during this period to the point of dissociating myself. Looking back, I can recall conducting the interviews and going through the process of listening and translating them. However, out of the research work, most of the moments are a blur between February and November 2021. This is an important event in my research timeline that I will return to further in this chapter.

In the meantime, I was struggling to keep myself separated from my participants; to make sense of their stories and the music they shared with me. This was another unexpected challenge I faced during the fieldwork process: I was trying to detach myself from the stories and separate myself from their experiences. However, the COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown have deeply affected me, resulting in significant and irreversible changes in my life. Trying to remain detached as an observer of their stories while every story felt so relatable to my experience was becoming detrimental to my research and well-being. When I recognised this and discussed it with my supervisors, they advised me to approach the stories and data from a different perspective—one that did not detach from the connections I had with my research but, on the contrary, embraced them. My perspective shifted from an outside point of view to an inside one when I allowed myself to embark on autoethnography. When I started weaving my participants' stories with mine, my analysis finally felt on the right track.

3.14 Data Analysis

In this section, I will shed light on the timeline and events that unfolded during the months leading up to, during and after the interview phase. The interviews I did for the research did not happen in a vacuum; the pandemic and lockdown also affected me. I experienced many challenges while planning the fieldwork, during the interviews, and after them, when I started to analyse the data, I had gathered. All I experienced affected how I made sense of the data and approached my analysis. I found myself in an intersection of chronic illness, grief and uncertainty while using music to navigate all of it,

which deepened my understanding of how methodology and research, in general, interact with reality.

I consider it necessary to understand how these events shaped my approach to data analysis and my overall research. While working on the Ethics project, I experienced much pain due to Endometriosis, a chronic illness that has to do with inflammation and chronic pain, among other things. The lockdown was at its most strict level, with restrictions on contact and limited access to medical treatment unless it was for severe or ur- gent reasons. After enduring several days of pain from May to July due to a cyst on my right ovary, I was informed that I needed urgent surgery on August 10th, 2020. While I was recovering from the surgery at the end of August, my mother became ill with COVID- 19 and was in covid-emergency care and intensive care overall for around three weeks. During the following weeks of my mum's death, I realised I could not read or write anything related to my research. It took me hours to read one journal page, and I could not understand half of it. My concentration was poor, and my energies were low or nonexistent; the same happened with my writing process; writing half a page would take me hours. I discussed working on the interviews with my supervisors instead of writing and reading for my Ph.D. I knew the interviews would require something different from me. The interviews began in November 2020 and continued until December 2020. The most challenging event occurred in early January when my father contracted COVID-19 and sadly passed away after three days of struggling. I paused the interviews for a few weeks and finished all of them at the beginning of February.

A combination of personal and practical reasons influenced my decision to continue with the research to pursue my doctorate after my dad passed away. There were three main reasons: First, If I had stopped, my funding would also have had to be put on hold, which was my only source of income at that time. Given the uncertainty my country was fac- ing, there was no certainty of when the funding could resume. If I had paused my stud- ies, I would have had to return to Mexico, and due to the ongoing pandemic, finding a job would have been very challenging. Additionally, my family was already burdened with the expenses related to my mother's illness and her passing. Therefore,

the best way I could help my family from afar was to care for myself and not become an additional complication.

The second reason, which has often motivated me during the challenging final months of writing my thesis, is that this journey was a promise I made to my family, especially my late father—completing this PhD as an academic goal and contribution to literature I wish to pursue, but more importantly, aiming to achieve a better quality of life through it. As a first-generation Mexican Ph.D. student, the sacrifices and efforts made by my family and me to bring me here have been significant and a reason for not giving up.

The third reason is my deep love for my research and belief in the subject. This was validated while doing the first round of interviews, and I sensed how meaningful the stories were and how much effort the participants had put into their playlists. It allowed me to confirm what I previously did in a theoretical manner while planning the fieldwork.Through the interviews, I realised how meaningful the act of sharing and discussing the playlists was. This realisation made me stay committed to the participants and the research despite all the circumstances surrounding me.

These personal experiences had a significant impact on my life and shaped my research work. Working on my research and planning fieldwork during lockdown was a challenging time filled with despair, hope, love, and music. It made me realise my strong commitment to completing the research and understand that these losses and challenges were not in a vacuum; they affected every part of my health, connections and work.

3.14.1 Using Autoethnography to make sense of the data

To analyse my data and make sense of it, I used Autoethnography by reflecting on my lockdown experience and how I used music during that time. I also reflected on the cor- relation between my own experience and my participants. I noticed that I had created a playlist in March 2020, when it became evident that we will go into lockdown at some point. The playlist was more about the feeling of the heavy cloud looming and how I tried to make

sense of everything while being far from my family and trying to hold on to hope. I named it "The Last Night on Earth", in honour of a short fiction story named "The Last Night of the World" (Bradbury, 1952) written by one of my favourite writers, Ray Bradbury. The story is about acceptance of fate. Everyone in the story seems to know that the world will end that night, and they choose to continue with their every- day lives, waiting in peace for the night to come. This playlist was created after listen- ing to Blonde Redhead's song "we should be holding hands", which embodied my feelings of uncertainty. The playlist was more about what I thought I was going to be experiencing during the pandemic and what I needed to hear to feel better just moments before the storm hit. The lockdown was not yet mandated, but we all knew it was a matter of time before we became part of our reality. However, another playlist was brewing more organically, consisting of the songs I kept coming to during the moments of pain, grief or uncertainty. These songs were collected throughout the pandemic, particularly during the initial phase of the lockdown.

I created the playlists the same way I had asked my participants to do it. A playlist, five to ten songs long, that reflected my experience of the lockdown. Then, I compared my songs with the participants' songs, as it was clear that we had similar approaches to us- ing some songs in their playlists. In a second review of the data, I noticed intersections among multiple participants and how they used their songs in the playlists. After noticing these coincidences, I decided to organise these intersections into fifteen categories, and finally, I compiled them into only ten. These categories represented the points where severals participant's songs (including mine) intersected.

3.15 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter discusses the in-depth exploration of the methodology employed in this research. It reflected on how it needed to be adapted to the challenges of the pandemic and how this context affected the research design and framework. The challenges also made me thoughtfully reflect and modify the fieldwork plan to navigate all the challenges and limitations faced during that time, such as shifting the interviews towards

remote interviews and using social media platforms as recruitment. I also discussed in this chapter how the methodology contained a cross perspective of narrative interviews, music elicitation tools through creating playlists and using journals as an important tool during fieldwork and later as an essential tool for the data analysis. I also reflect on the importance of being flexible, pivoting and adapting as the research re- quires, ensuring there is still a methodology, and the research methods remain robust and valid despite all the challenges. This ability was crucial in maintaining the project's relevance and integrity during the pandemic. The narrative interviews provided participants with a safe space to share their lockdown experience with me. This participant-centred approach gave us a deep understanding of their stories. It highlighted the im- portance of the researcher as a facilitator and presence that helped maintain a safe space for the participants to share their stories. Using music elicitation as a tool within the narrative interviews was the core and heart of this methodology. Their use during my interviews highlighted the potential of playlists as a music elicitation tool and how music can serve as a bridge for individuals to tell their stories and navigate challenging moments such as lockdown.

This chapter also discusses the ethical considerations, the reflections and the plans that went through the process of creating the methods for data gathering. Obtaining informed consent from participants was a priority, and the commitment to participant's well-being through all the interviews was heavily considered in every step, from re- search design to data collection. Finally, the challenges faced during the making of this research, especially the data collection, personal and pandemic-related, were relevant and became essential to the whole research process. This methodological approach al- lowed an in-depth exploration of the role of playlists as tools to navigate challenging times, particularly the COVID-19 experience lockdown in Mexico and, by an extent, in Glasgow.

Chapter 4. Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter aims to present and discuss the findings and results of the research project, highlighting the key discoveries and their implications. I will provide an overview of the critical findings of the research intertwined with my personal experience and reflections from an auto-ethnographic approach. Ultimately, this chapter aims to provide an insightful reflection of the playlists and the participants' experience of the lockdown told through them along with mine.

To make sense of the data, I used a combination of thematic analysis of interview transcripts, personal reflections, and an autoethnographic approach. The discussion in this chapter centres on the themes that emerged from the analysis, while Chapter 5 further explores the relationship between these reflections and the discussion of my KFs.

Chapter 4 is divided into five sections. In Section 4.1, I explain the stages this chapter went through before reaching its final form. In Section 4.2, I describe the process of revisiting the interviews and playlists of the participants and the importance of taking some time and distance to reflect on the data collected. Section 4.3 presents the ten   that emerged from the data collected about the participants' experience during the lockdown, as told through the playlists and interviews, as well as my lockdown playlist and experience. These themes include Togetherness, Internal changes, Loss, Anger, Feel-good moments, Perseverance, Interconnection, Lockdown Experience, and Post-pandemic Future. Section 4.4 closes the chapter with a consideration of the role of music and playlists in helping individuals navigate the challenges of the pandemic, drawing on quotations from interviewees and my reflections. In this chapter, I focus the discussion on the themes that emerged from the data analysis. I explore the relationship between these themes and the relevant literature. Throughout chapters 4 and 5, I incorporate diverse quotations from participant interviews. And in this

chapter, I add reflective paragraphs written in italics to illustrate significant moments in my writing process. The reflective paragraphs written in italics, are integral to my autoethnographic approach. These reflections illustrate significant moments in my writing process and provide insight into how my personal experiences and emotional responses shaped my interpretation of the data.

Chapter 4 is an extended version of the paper "*Playlists,connection and Covid. Making sense of lockdown and loss with Mexico City and Glasgow*" published in January 2023 in the edited volume *Music and Social Inclusion: International Research and Practice in Complex Settings* (Routldge, 2023, pp. 69-83).

4.2 The process of writing this chapter in three different stages

As I began writing this chapter, it unfolded through three distinct stages, each shaped by my personal and participant experiences, introspection, and the evolving dynamics of my research process. This chapter was written in three separate moments before finding its final form. I started writing this chapter within the six months following my dad's passing. I finished the interviews around the end of March 2021 and started listening to them and the playlists while translating them from Spanish to English, making notes while trying to find patterns and make sense of them. Around that time, I was invited to be part of a book about Music and Social inclusion, as mentioned earlier. And while trying to come up with an idea to write for the book chapter, I realised I needed to approach all the interviews from a different perspective, as explained earlier.

The first step of developing this chapter was coming to terms with how I approached my participants' playlists and all they shared with me. As discussed in Chapter 3, I incorporated autoethnography, (Ellis & Bochner, 1996; Colleen McMillan & Helen Eaton Ramirez, 2016; Hughes, S., & Pennington, J. 2017) an approach that intertwines personal experiences and self-reflection within the research process. This perspective allowed me to

honour my participants' narratives while acknowledging the impact of my own lived experiences. It bridged the gap between detached observation and active engagement, creating a more authentic and immersive exploration for my research.

To do this, first, I decided to listen to what the playlists and participants were asking of me. Then, I did what felt more honest and sustainable to develop this chapter, which meant putting my experience of the lockdown along with the participants' experience instead of trying to detach from them. This decision not only saved my research but also provided me with the agency to write my chapter as I considered best. It meant I could write about my lockdown experience too and try to make sense of what I was going through during that process. Doing this felt like I was finally able to be myself, able to be whole and integrate all the parts of me while working on the analysis and stop mutilating myself by trying to leave behind my experience while writing about something affecting me. Spry's words capture the feeling I was experiencing around that time—like speaking from a detached, dismembered state:

"I have often felt like I was speaking from outside of my body in my professional and personal lives. In fact, for me, academe has always been about speaking from a disembodied head. (...)In calling to myself through the performance of autoethnography, someone from inside my body, finally, gingerly, began to call back."
(Spry, T. pp.716, 2001).

Spry's work resonates with my journey of finding my voice and embracing authenticity within my academic work. During this chapter stage, I took a moment to reflect on my experiences and how they had evolved since the initial interviews. As I became more familiar with my participants' lockdown playlists and their reasons why each song had a place on them, I also carefully observed the development of my lockdown playlist. As I reflected, I discovered a unique connection—the playlists of my participants, and mine intersected in specific ways. Initially, I chose four meaningful moments that captured these intersections and embodied our shared experiences. While

these moments became essential parts of the chapter I contributed to the book, I soon realised that more moments deserved further exploration. This realisation compelled me to expand the discussion.

The next part of crafting this chapter involved revisiting the playlists and interviews after my return from a trip to Mexico, where I had gone to spend the holidays with my family. Coming back from that journey, my heart still ached, and my mind remained clouded, although less numb than before. It had been almost three years since I last visited my home country due to the pandemic, making the trip to Mexico in December 2021 incredibly significant for me. Personally, it provided a chance to reconnect with my roots and find solace among my loved ones after enduring such challenging times.

During my trip to Mexico, I experienced three transformative moments that brought me the closure I didn't realise I needed. First, my brother's wedding became a beautiful celebration of love not just for him and his wife but for our entire family coming together in the absence of our parents. Then, soon after, the first anniversary of my father's passing approached, and his wife hosted a *rezo*—a traditional gathering where we prayed and shared pan dulce and coffee in his honour. During the *rezo*, as the organ player began singing his favourite song, I was caught off guard. Overwhelmed with emotions, I tried to collect myself in the bathroom, only to have one of my aunts hold my hand tightly. At that moment, I realised I wasn't alone in my grief. Back in Glasgow, I was used to going through my grief alone; no one knew my dad and the only way someone could keep me company was on a bench in the park in the cold weather. Instead, surrounded by people who loved him dearly and missed him just as much as I did, I was able to mourn him in community.

Towards the end of the trip, my youngest brother tested positive for Covid-19, so I decided to stay at my mother's house to keep him company. We spent those days watching movies and having late dinners at the kitchen table, just like we used to when our mom was still with us. It felt like those moments existed outside of time, detached from my everyday life. Knowing that the house would soon be sold, saying goodbye in this unique way felt like a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. These three moments in Mexico played a vital role

in helping me come to terms with my losses and slowly adapt to my new reality. They marked a clear division—a "before and after" in my journey.

Through these experiences, I gained a better understanding of the interconnectedness of my findings, allowing me to see them with newfound clarity.

I have gone through many different moments and realisations during my research. It might have been obvious, but I only recently understood something important: I am writing this dissertation while healing. My writing process has been and still is parallel with my grieving process. I am discovering things about myself while I write this.

4.3 Revisiting the Interviews and Playlists

After returning from Mexico and settling in Glasgow, I took time to reflect on where I stood with my research. So much has changed within me since I started writing the previous chapter. As I went through my participants' playlists and interviews again, I realised that I hadn't shared my playlist with anyone like my participants had shared theirs with me. That's when I decided to ask a friend, who was also a PhD student in the Humanities if she would go through my playlist with me.

During our session, I made it clear that she could ask me anything she wanted while we listened to the songs together. It wasn't just a casual listening session; it became a genuine and intimate experience. The whole interaction lasted about an hour and was both vulnerable and enlightening. It gave me a new perspective on what it meant to share my own lockdown experiences through the playlist. I understood that it wasn't the exact same exercise as my participants had gone through, and the context was different too. But it was the closest way for me to understand what it meant to share, not just create, a playlist with someone else.

Sharing my playlist with my friend brought about some surprising realisations about my own experiences. I saw parallels with what my participants had

gone through while sharing their experiences through their songs. Some were surprised by the depth of the playlist, discovering that it held more personal meaning than they had initially thought. Others noticed how certain songs took on new significance during the lockdown, something I experienced as well. Going through this shared process with my friend gave me important insights into the dynamics of sharing personal stories through music.

As I took a closer look at our lockdown playlists in a second round, I noticed similarities in how we all chose songs and used them during those challenging times. Some songs became a way for us to process feelings like sadness or anger, while others seemed to capture the essence of our pandemic experience, among other examples. It felt like each of us had a personal conversation with our songs, but at the same time, there was a collective and organic connection to the music in our daily lives throughout the lockdown.

As I dived deeper into these observations, I began to identify patterns and intersections among the playlists. First, I selected the songs and stories that intersected the most, eventually grouping them into 10 categories. Each category represented a distinct aspect or theme that emerged from our collective musical journey during the lockdown. It was a process of finding those common threads that connected us and made our experiences more meaningful through music and creating our playlists.

With patterns, I refer to recurring themes, emotions, and musical choices that appeared across multiple participants' playlists and mine, revealing common ways music was used during our lockdown. Intersections refer to specific moments where our stories and reasons to listen to a song overlapped. This process allowed me to group the stories and songs into 10 categories, each representing a distinct aspect or theme that emerged from our collective musical journey during the lockdown.

During the initial months of 2022, my focus was primarily on analysing the interviews and playlists. I didn't know that 2022, especially its latter half, would be the most challenging year I had ever faced. It wasn't until the year's end, when I sought help for my mental well-being, that I fully comprehended

the extent of my exhaustion and emotional numbness. Therapy provided me with professional support and allowed me to recognise the burnout I had experienced throughout the past year. I had been pushing myself too hard, trying to navigate the loss of my parents and the trauma inflicted by the pandemic.

The strain of maintaining academic rigour while simultaneously addressing my personal losses took a significant toll on me. It felt at times like both things couldn't share the same space. Additionally, external factors, such as the conclusion of my scholarship (which meant applying for jobs) coinciding with severe chronic pain, only worsened the situation. As a result, I found myself in a depressive episode, as assessed by a psychiatrist. I felt completely frozen and detached from everything for months. To prioritise my well-being, I made the decision to temporarily suspend my studies. I took a couple of weeks to rest, deliberately avoiding any engagement with my PhD work.

When I eventually returned to my chapter and revisited the interviews and playlists, I did so with a newfound understanding of the internal shifts I had undergone once again. Yet, surprisingly, the songs on my lockdown playlists continued to serve as a vivid bridge and container for my lockdown experience. They almost felt like a time machine, transporting me back to a specific place in time. 2022 gave me a crucial lesson on the importance of centring my well-being and mental health throughout the research process and above anything else, giving me the perspective of what my therapist would say over and over to me: "Your parents are not here, but you are. You're still here and alive, and your existence is precious to many of us".

I am experiencing high anxiety while trying to put this chapter together. So, I paused and tried to understand why. And I can feel the pressure of finishing within a few months, making sense of all this grief and all these stories and trying to honour them the best I can. But it also makes me look back and see how much I have struggled for the past three years. And how this journey, contrary to what I believed it's anything but linear. It's been a lot of coming back to the same point of despair but from another perspective. Over and over. Right now, when I pause, instead of letting the anxiety build up, I ask

with curiosity and kindness, why is this happening?

4.4 Developing the song categories and subcategories: Ten songs, ten moments from the lockdown

After spending more than a year immersed in my participants' playlists, carrying their songs with me every day, and analysing their interviews, this chapter finally took its final shape. First, I connected the songs one on one, trying to find where my choices overlapped with theirs. But on a second review, I noticed moments of intersections shared between different participants and me. I organised these intersections into 10, representing the points where most of the participants' playlists converged. I was trying to do all this work while grappling with burnout and complicated grief, and I struggled for a long time to make sense of it all, yet it always felt like something crucial was missing.

It was as if these playlists had a secret message to convey, one that I couldn't figure out until the third review. Stepping away from my PhD and returning with a fresh perspective after a three-week break seemed to be the key I needed. But what surprised me was how intimately acquainted I had become with the songs in those categories, knowing the reasons behind each participant's selection by heart. This unique combination ultimately was the solution for me to unlock the secret hidden within.

As I worked on this chapter, I compiled all the songs from the categories I selected into a playlist. It became my companion during walks and chores and served as a musical backdrop while I wrote. Month after month, I immersed myself in these tunes; I had dialogues with them and made them talk to each other. This process allowed me to make connections and shed light on the points where most of the playlists converged. It was through this approach that I realised each playlist could be seen as a map, a blueprint, or a snapshot of their lockdown experiences.

Bringing all the playlists together and making comparisons allowed me to see them with a bird's-eye view, revealing overlapping sections and key focal

points. It reminded me of the markers on a map, guiding visitors through a museum or amusement park and inviting them to explore further. These markers, much like the intersections in our playlists, could serve as a guide or an invitation to revisit this unique journey of the lockdown. Individually, neither the participants nor I were aware of these connections, but I had the privilege of having all these playlists and interviews in one place to dialogue with. So, when overlapping our playlists, a vivid map began to take shape. I could trace a map of the *places* we went to during our confinement; it traced the emotional landscapes we traversed during the lockdown, not in a physical sense, but through the music we carefully selected and cherished. A visualisation of the map and more details on this concept are discussed with more detail in the following chapter.

In an insightful study exploring the impact of music during collective events such as the 9/11 terrorist attack, as well as its role in collective healing vigils and public demonstrations, Forman (2002) emphasises the significance of music as a powerful conduit for individuals to express their existence and facilitate the communication of complex social phenomena. This resonates deeply within the context of the playlists created by the participants, as these curated collections of songs served as a helpful tool for conveying the nuances and complexities of their lockdown experiences. The playlists and songs within them became a means of expressing their ontological status and effectively communicating their lockdown journey in ways that other forms of communication might fall short.

Drawing on the findings of Sloboda, Lamont, and Greasley (2009), which detail how self-chosen music can be organised into four recurring functions— distraction, energising, entrainment, and meaning enhancement—my research similarly categorises music during the lockdown based on these functions. Examining the recurring uses and moments of intersection between participants' playlists and my experiences highlights how these functions manifested and provided insight into the ways we used music during the lockdown pandemic. This approach underscores the significant impact of self-chosen music on emotional and functional needs during this challenging period.

After carefully reviewing the songs and the connections within them one last time, I selected the moments where intersections were most prominent. From this process, I selected ten moments where our playlists and songs collided. These categories encapsulate the shared experiences and connections I discovered through our playlists and songs. Each of these songs served a different purpose, whether it was the realisation that we were all going through this together, moments of self-reflection during the lockdown, or processing the losses we experienced. We also used music to imagine a future where things would return to "normal". I categorised the ten moments in the following table.

Table 4.1: Categories of Intersecting Moments in Playlists

Categories	Subcategories	
1. Togetherness		The collective experience of enduring the lockdown. Participants shared a sense of navigating similar challenges with me, knowing they were part of a wider collective experience through the interviews for my research.
2. Internal changes		Moments of self-awareness during the lockdown
3. Grief		Processing the losses experienced during the pandemic
4. *Tristear* (Sadness)		Expressing and inhabiting so row through music
5. Anger		Channeling emotions of anger/ frustration through music
6. Feel-good Moments		Using music to uplift spirits and feel better
7.Resilience		Finding strength and resilience during the pandemic

8.Interconnection	1. A song and a moment shared with someone else 2. A Musical Ritual: One song listened with someone else more than once 8.2.3 Songs that remind them of someone	Music as a shared experience, involving specific songs shared with others, repeated musical rituals, and songs interlinked with memories of someone else.
9. Lockdown Experience	1. Songs connected with the lockdown experience 2. The perceived idea of the pandemic	Reflections on the lockdown connected with music, including songs related to the experience and the perceived impact of the pandemic on daily life
10. Post-pandemic Future		Using music to imagine a future after the Covid-19 pandemic

Table 4.2 Categories and Corresponding Songs from Lockdown Playlists

Categories and subcategories	Participants	Songs
1. Togetherness	Valeria's Playlist Lala's Playlist	'Night's Falling' by Andrew Bird 'Come Down (COLORS Studio version)' by Joesef
2. Internal Changes	Mario's Playlist Eve's Playlist Valeria's Playlist	'On' by Kelly Lee Owens 'Cycling Trivialities' by José Gonzaléz 'Keep Going' by This Is The Kit
3. Loss	Andrea's Playlist Samuel's Playlist Valeria's Playlist	'Rezo por vos (MTV Unplugged version)' by Charly Garcia 'Hold On' by Alabama Shakes 'Pink Rabbits' by The National
4. Tristear (Feeling Sadness)	Hector's Playlist Carlos' Playlist Valeria's Playlist	'One' by Harry Nelson 'Que corran' by Los Caligari 'Horrible things' by Future Wife
5. Anger	Valeria's Playlist Ramiro's Playlist Eve's Playlist Emilio's Playlist	'Fuck You' by Lilly Allen 'TRUMPETS' by _BY.ALEXANDER 'Blue Rose' by Amen Dune 'Show me' by Audioslave 'Every Day is a Miracle' by David Byrne
6. Feel-good moments	Valentina's Playlist Mario's Playlist Fabia's Playlist Valeria's Playlist	'Man is Not a Bird' by Broadcast 'Dorothy' by Polo and Pan 'Azotea' by Luisa Almaguer

Theme	Playlist	Song
7. Perseverance	Gabriel's Playlist	'Fear Not for Men' by Fela Kuti
	Hector's Playlist	'Rid of Me' by Pj Harvey
		'I am the Resurrection" by the Stone Roses
	Isa's Playlist	'Immigrants (we get the job done)' by Residente, Riz Ahmed, Snow The Product
	Valeria's Playlist	'Nos deseo' by Tremenda Jauría and Kumbia Queers
8. A song and a moment shared		'La Barca' by Los Tres Caballeros
	Nere's Playlist	'Querida' by Juan Gabriel
	Ari's Playlist	'Playa Giron' by Silvio Rodríguez
8.2 A musical ritual: one song shared with someone more than once	Ramiro's Playlist	'Heart Full of Stars' by Coldplay
	Mauro's Playlist	'Solamente una vez' by Pedro Infante
	Carlos's Playlist	'Eres' by Cafe Tacuva
	Gabriel's Playlist	'Marieta' by Ibrahim Ferrer
8.3 Songs that remind them of someone else	Valentina's Playlist	'Strawberry Fields Forever' The Beatles
	Hector's Playlist	'Ulver' by Nostalgia (Norwegian band)
	Rafael's Playlist	
	Mauro's Playlist	

9. Songs connected to the lockdown experience	Dara's Playlist	'Oom Sha La La' by Haley Heynderickx
	Valeria's Playlist	'Las tumbas' by Ismael Rivera
	Ari's Playlist	'Monotonía' by The Growlers
	Rafa's Playlist	'La Bamba' by Los Lobos
9.2 The perceived idea of the pandemic	Mario's Playlist	'Nobody' by Mitski
	Samuel's Playlist	'White Room' by Cream '
10 post-pandemic future	Valeria's Playlist	"A Comma' by Serpentwithteeth
	Isa's Playlist	Subterranean Homesick Alien by Radiohead
	Mar's Playlist	'Close' by Niña Tormenta

4.4.1 Togetherness

In my second lockdown playlist, which I affectionately call "the true one," the first song that captured my heart was 'Night's Falling' by Andrew Bird. He dedicated this song to health workers worldwide in a 'Stay Away show', an online concert organised by The Blogotheque (www.blogotheque.net) in March 2020. The Blogotheque, known for its musical content, organised live-streamed performances on Instagram during the lockdown. They had an online chat where people interacted while the show was happening. The song talked about night falling as a metaphor for dark times coming and the hope of being together through it. In the chorus, he sang the comforting words, 'But you're not alone, you're not alone.' At that moment, the online chat lit up with messages of kindness and support from people worldwide. The moment intertwined with the song became a safe haven for me, a place where I realised I was going through this experience with people from all over the world commenting on the chat and keeping each other company.

One of my participants, Lala, also used music in her playlist as a reminder that we weren't alone in this pandemic. Lala lives with her mum and dog in a house in the south of Mexico. She works as a freelancer content creator in social media. In our interview, she shared that the song 'Come Down (COLORS Studio version)' by Glasgewian artist Joesef made her think about everything happening globally during the pandemic. She referred to a part of the song that says, 'We are all a little bit broken', for her, listening to that song was like sharing brokenness with the world:

"(The song) talks about the broken ones and the sad ones. And all that has happened during these months... everyone is sad. And one way or another, every person is broken. During this pandemic, all of us felt broken at some moment."

When Lala talked about her daily walks with her dogs around her neighbourhood, she broke for a moment and started crying. Lala explained that seeing Mexico City so quiet and alone was overwhelming. She told me she has been sensitive and crying for anything since the pandemic began. I could deeply relate to her experience, as there were times when I deliberately avoided sad or stressful movies or shows, feeling that I couldn't handle any more sadness or stress than I was already carrying. For Lala, the song became a vessel for her sadness and fear, encapsulating the brokenness of the world and herself with it. This use of a song to hold an emotion is something DeNora reflects on in her work:

"To play music as a virtual means of expressing/constructing emotion is also to define the temporal and qualitative structure of that emotion, to play it out in real-time, and then move on. In this sense music is both an instigator and a container of feeling – anger, sorrow, and so forth."
(DeNora, p. 41, 2000)

DeNora's concept of music as an emotional container captures how participants like Lala used songs to hold and express their innermost feelings.

4.4.2 Internal changes

The second significant moment that resonated with my experience was shared by Mario, a Colombian artist who ventured into illustration and photography. He moved to Mexico City in 2019 and found himself navigating a breakup during the lockdown. However, Mario found solace in living with two flatmates and a dog he cared for. He credits them with helping him endure the confinement. He chose 'On' by Kelly Lee Owens, a song from an album made during the lockdown.

"During lockdown, I found new things deep in me. The transition I am living in (the song) translates it to music. It speaks of leaving, of moving out in a certain way. We cannot go back. Even if we stand still, the world

keeps moving forward. It is a calling to let go of things, even hope, at a particular moment."

Another song that also talks about an internal change and actually is the catalyst of such internal change is the one shared by Eve, Cycling Trivialities by José Gonzalez

Who cares in a hundred years from now. All your small steps, all your shitty clouds? Who cares in a hundred years from now? Who'll remember all the players? Who'll remember all the clowns? When all that happened (the pandemic), I was very shocked. I felt that everything was falling apart. Then, just when I finished cancelling several events, at least the nearest ones, I put this song on with my headphones. What Jose Gonzales says (in the song): *your cycling trivialities.* "No mames (no fucking way in Mexican lingo), it's my mental state. I'm not going crazy; I'm worrying about trivialities" that, at the end of the day, well in perspective, muy cabron, they don't mean anything when you're in a pandemic, you know?... I lis- tened to that song like thirty times. *So, how's it gonna be? When it all comes down, cycling trivialities.* I started to draw lines, and I thought, "no mames, this is giving me a lot of peace", and singing *cyclin trivialities*, I said, "yes, dude, that's totally it". And the next day I woke up and it was like... from there I feel much better, you know."

During my lockdown, I reflected on the internal changes happening to me. I found solace listening to a song titled 'Keep Going' by This Is The Kit. The lyrics spoke about moving through darkness with love, and one part of the chorus sings, 'Movement is deciding. Forward is the doing', which meant I kept choosing to move forward even in darkness. Through Mario's song, I could see how we were all changing and shifting through this experience and how music played a significant role in helping us cope. I find it interesting how our songs and reflections on them were about finding a way to move on from an internal place even when our external reality has stopped. DeNora (2000) also touches upon this idea of finding ourselves in music when she states, 'Music is a mirror that

allows one to see one's self' (DeNora, p. 63, 2000).

In the next chapter, I'll explore deeper into the connection between music and self-reflection and how both the participants and I used music as a tool to navigate the complexities of the pandemic.

4.4.3 Loss

In addition to exploring the participants' experiences of togetherness and internal changes, there were also moments when we shared the weight of grief and loss during the pandemic. Some participants shared their stories of grieving or losing loved ones to Covid, resonating deeply with my experience. That opened a space for us to exchange thoughts and feelings about our particular context during the pandemic while carrying the burden of loss without the opportunity to grieve collectively among family and friends. The strict limitations on funerals, particularly in terms of attendance, meant that traditional practices such as *velorios* (funerals) in Mexico, which involve communal gatherings, food, music, and vigil of the body, were not possible. The absence of these shared mourning rituals complicated the challenges of processing grief in solitude during the lockdown.

Furthermore, our loved ones passed away with no chance to honour their lives, say goodbye or make them company during their last moments. This added a layer of frustration and, as I later discovered in therapy, even trauma for the family and friends left behind. Sharing this aching with someone else made me feel less alone. Together, we found comfort in knowing that our experiences of loss and the challenges were felt by others, which I believe helped with a sense of belonging and at least a glimmer of healing amidst the collective grief.

I understood this further on the road to writing my thesis; those were crucial moments that helped me move from my sadness, where I felt seen and understood by people who were going through experiences close to mine and handled crises and difficult moments similar to mine.

While I would never have thought that grief would become part of my everyday life, the pandemic transformed it into an undeniable reality that I and so many others had to confront.

As highlighted in the literature on autoethnography and grief, "even the most profound and life-altering events eventually become integrated into our everyday existence" (Kivinen, 2020, pp. 503,). The loss of loved ones became part of the new normality, a common situation during the pandemic, which in a way, divided the world among the ones who have lost someone and the ones lucky enough who didn't. My participants and I were tasked with navigating this uncharted territory alongside all the other challenges brought about by the pandemic. However, as the author suggests, traumatic events have a way of rendering us vulnerable, propelling us on a lifelong journey to articulate and visualise our experiences (Kivinen, 2020). This is precisely what I have chosen to do by documenting and sharing my intertwined experiences of lockdown and grief.

For loss, I gathered under this moment songs that talk about the experience of loss during the lockdown. The first example of this moment is a song with Andrea. Andrea is a jazz music curator and writer facing significant challenges during the pandemic. She went through a breakup with her partner of many years at the beginning of the lockdown and, sadly, lost her best friend during the early moments of the pandemic. She chose a song by the Argentinian rocker Charly Garcia, entitled "Rezo por vos (MTV Unplugged version)" (I Pray for You in the English translation):

"My best friend passed away in May (2020). He was in a coma for a month. There were nights when I thought about that situation a lot. 'What comes after death? Why do these things happen? At the same time, I was thinking about all the deaths in the street and the proximity of death. I was reading an article today that might seem very alarmist, but it's true. It said, 'Mexico City smells like death'. Once again, along with these constant sounds of ambulances plus my personal situation, I do

think that reflecting on life and death is very present".

I shared with Andrea that my mother had passed away in September 2020 and that during the 21 days of her being sick, I reflected a lot about death and why things happened as they did. Did everything need to be as painful as it was? Did my mum have to endure all that pain, only to die anyway? And did it need to be that way, alone in a hospital without anyone by her side? I remember listening non-stop to a song by The National titled 'Pink Rabbits'. I would listen to it after receiving the briefing the hospital gave my siblings and me every day for 11 nights about my mum's health condition. I would blast 'Pink Rabbits' and sing out loud when the chorus sang 'I didn't ask for this pain, it just came over me' to make space for all my emotions and all that was happening around me. The song became my lifeline during one of the most arduous chapters of my life. The song gave me the agency to reclaim my feelings of anger and powerlessness in the situation. I hold on to it every night, playing it for hours. And I believe it is because I found a song that helped me focus on how I felt I could go through this channelling time. As DeNora states: "Music can be used as a resource for making sense of situations. At the level of daily life, music has powers" (DeNora, 2000, p. 63).

For me, this song was a shelter and a translator of my deepest feelings, and to this day, every time I listen to it, it helps me make sense of what I went through during those 21 days.

The last example is Samuel, who like me, was deeply impacted by Covid-19. Unfortunately, Samuel's mother passed away from aggressive cancer during the pandemic. To make matters worse, just three months later, his grandfather, who was like a father figure to him, also passed away from Covid-19. We talked about how Covid-19 affected people with other health conditions, a collateral aspect often overlooked. We also talked about how the lockdown didn't allow us to grieve appropriately and honour our loved ones as they deserved and as we needed.

"Everything... like funerals, or everything that makes your brain understand what has come to an end is forbidden right now. I feel (this pandemic) is leaving something ugly in the collective feeling. The worst is that we don't even know where we are. If in the end, the beginning or in the middle".

Samuel closed the playlist with the song "Hold On" by the Alabama Shakes; he told me that song reminded him of his mum. He said the following about the song:
"In the end, I believe that from all of this, there are little things that are worth preserving, and one of those is love. Love is a tool, a concept, a convention, which I believe should be preserved beyond this, that it is worth living to continue feeling love."

I've noticed that grief bled into the playlists of Andrea, Samuel, and mine. It's like we were living our reality through the lenses of loss. Hence, the songs we chose for the playlists have an underlying reflection on life and death that didn't appear on the other participants' playlist but one, Isa's. She linked many of her songs to grief and the idea of dying or losing someone during the pandemic; I'll go deeper into one of her songs later in the section about the post-pandemic future, and I consider this might be due to her losing her parents and coping with grief since a young age. But, overall, as I have been reflecting on this chapter about how music has always been a source of comfort and company for me during challenging times, music associated with grief can give solace to individuals processing loss: "Music associated with loss could also support when one was alone, through its linkage with a similarly affected fellowship" (O'Callaghan, C., McDermott, F., Hudson, P. & Zalcberg, J, 2013, pp.22). This encloses how helpful music can be during grief and the act of feeling in the company of others going through this feeling through music.

4.4.4 *Tristear* (Feeling Sadness)

In almost everyone's playlists, there is a moment, or more than one, where sadness emerged. The need to embrace and contain sadness in a song became a recurring theme during our lockdown experience. There were different shades of sadness in the participants' playlists and mine. Isa, one of the participants, talks about sadness, music and Mexican culture and how the lockdown affected this process:

"I believe that both the Portuguese and us Mexicans understand how to inhabit sadness, referring to the word *Saudade (*Silva, Z. B., 2012). There is a space where we can allow ourselves to be sad without completely surrendering to it, you know? I think *rancheras* (a genre of music that focuses on romantic love in its lyrics) capture that essence. *Tristea*r is a specific action: we come together to be happy- sad. Check out the word itself; we even have a verb for it: '*Vamos a tristear*' (Let's get together to be sad)."

The act of *tristear*, processing sadness through music when in the company of others, was something we (my participants and I) couldn't do in lockdown. It was one of the coping mechanisms we had in our culture to help us go through difficult times. We've learned to find some release and comfort in sharing our sadness in a collective way and music is almost always present. Sharing music when we are sad is a way we've learned to emotionally regulate ourselves, which shows up throughout their playlists; I'll discuss this subject further in the "sharing songs with others" moment. The theme of sadness manifests in various forms, all within the context of experiencing it during lockdown.

For example, Hector is a high school teacher living alone during the pandemic. With his work transitioning to online classes and minimal social interactions, he spoke about embracing loneliness and sadness through the song "One" by Harry Nelson:

"This song talks about loneliness, the hinder of one being the hardest number. I mean, if I am going through the same as the song says... it can't be that bad, right? I had felt lonely sometimes, but it's about feeling it with dignity, and this song materialises that feeling".

Hector was one of the participants that did not use an online platform to create his playlist. He instead wrote it down and after deciding which songs were the ones that were worth staying in the playlist, he wrote the list in his journal, so he could have it documented as something relevant worth remembering.

Another participant, Carlos, who is married with a young child, shared with me during our conversation that he was the primary provider for his family. However, his employer reduced his pay when lockdowns were implemented. Despite this, he did not tell his wife, and as a result, their expenses remained the same while their income significantly decreased. This put significant stress on him during an already stressful and uncertain time. Carlos used his song to cry and release after his therapy sessions. The song is "Que corran" by the Argentinian group "Los Caligaris".

"When I feel I can't go no longer. That I (am so frustrated I feel like) have to punch a door, I play that song and think: "don't worry, we're okay, we're okay. We are going through the pandemic okay. We have no casualties as a family. You have not had problems that you couldn't solve. Calm down, this will pass". I listened to this song a lot whenever I was feeling sad. But a nostalgic kind of sadness, because there are different kinds of sadness, right? So when I felt depressed, like life wasn't worth it, I would put the other types of songs that would give me extra power, right? But this would be more like, "I'm sad, I'm disheartened". I would even put this song to cry because I had to start taking therapy online. I would put it after therapy; whenever I dealt with all those (harsh) things. This song makes me cry; it moves me so deeply that it makes me cry."

Research about the tendency of listening to sad music as a way to regulate emotions (Sachs et al., 2015), indicates that sadness often stems from a perceived loss in various aspects of life, such as freedom, relationships, or health. During the lockdown, the loss of normalcy, social interaction, loss of jobs and the actual loss of loved ones were all deeply felt by many, leading to different types of sadness. For some participants, such as Mauricio and Carlos, music allowed them to embrace their sadness or contain feelings of loneliness.

*When I'm sad or angry, I don't usually tend to listen to music that feels sad to me. I might listen to some song that relates to what I'm experiencing or a song that reminds me of something but, I'll use other mechanisms to go through the emotion, like going for a walk, journaling or dancing. I would listen to music that helped uplift my mood; listening to sad songs while being sad gave me a sense of anxiety, of going through and spiral I wasn't sure where it'll end. But, for the first time in my life, after my dad passed away, with my mum's loss just months before and the lockdown still going, I remember feeling all the mellow, light-hearted, lovely songs I used to listen to like a complete lie. It felt like music wasn't listening **to me** as always had, she (Music is a she or a they for me) wasn't giving me the shelter she always had. Until I started gravitating towards the sad, angry songs that were usually left aside on my playlists. Allowing them into my everyday life was an important shift into my reality. It made me understand that I was much sadder and desolate than I thought. But at the same time, when I allowed these songs in my life, they created a space for their company and the feelings they brought with them every time I listened to them. It allowed me to own the weird, awful situation I was going through and eventually to be able to move out of that space.*

My song associated with this emotion represents a combination of sadness and grief. During lockdown, I came to understand that for me, sadness never arrives alone but is always paired with another emotion. Sometimes it was sadness and despair, mostly at the beginning of the lockdown, or sadness and longing whenever I missed my family. But I

could cope with those kinds of sadness by listening to happy songs that infused me with hope and perseverance. The one kind that wasn't as easy to please was when sadness came in the company of grief. Whenever that kind of sadness was around me, I would get in a bad mood when the music I listened to didn't match my emotions. On those occasions I would prefer to be in the presence of silence instead of music. This sensation was something I have never experienced before in my life. Music had always been a good company until now and during that time I started to feel it was failing me. But one time, while wandering around town and listening to music with my headphones I listened to the first phrase of the song 'Horrible things' by Future Wife.

"It's horrible what happened, and I'm sorry that you're suffering and probably won't feel better for a while". I immediately felt a wave of relief and warmth, and although the song was very dark and I was inconsolable, the song gave me solace, a door to walk through that nothing had given me during this time. The song did something I needed at that time. It acknowledge my pain while not trying to diminish it as many people had done before trying to make me feel better ('*Time will heal the pain*', '*They're in a better place now*', '*Don't cry they wouldn't't like to see you like this*', etc.), but mainly stating the fact that what was happening was terrible and there wasn't much to do about it, was a breath of fresh air. I still come back to this song from time to time whenever this kind of sadness comes. It's a safe place for me to feel sad and seen.

I'm crying right now while I write this. I have to stop and recollect myself. I've cried many times while transcribing the interviews and listening to the participants' songs and mine. I am humbled and honoured for them to trust me with their experience. Writing this chapter has been challenging on many levels. It's been an emotional journey. I keep feeling guilty for not doing it faster and being more productive, but going through the songs means going through the experience and my participants' experiences. Whenever I try to rush this part, something inside me feels physically and emotionally ill. So, I defy

time and productivity and honour my pace for this chapter.

Considering sadness and the lockdown experience, the insight shared by Sachs et al (2015) resonates deeply. They propose that music embodying grief and sorrow often carries a heightened sense of beauty compared to music associated with joy and happiness. This resonates for us (the participants and me) for our lockdown experience. Sad songs gave us a sense of connection to others and an opportunity to channel how we felt during challenging times as a way of self-expression.

4.4.5 Anger

Anger was present in straightforward ways on the playlists of many participants. Embracing anger through songs appears in almost all the participants' playlists in different ways, from feeling frustrated due to isolation in a tiny apartment with an entire family to feeling angry about the country's situation during the pandemic.

My moment for danger was "Fuck You" by Lilly Allen; it found me one afternoon after dealing with frustration, chronic pain and sorrow all day. I was resisting feeling the anger; the BLM (Black Lives Matter) movement was in full bloom, which was bringing a lot of topics around inequality and systemic racism to the surface in Scotland but also back in Mexico; the loss of lives due to the coronavirus was really high in Mexico and personally, I was dealing with rewriting my dissertation and trying to come to terms that most of what I've written and read was not going to be useful while experiencing so much pain due to my endometriosis and massive ovarian cyst that was disabling me for most of the day. I was trying to keep myself positive, but it wasn't working. This song was a permission slip to dance with while doing the global sign of the middle finger and singing: "Fuck you, Fuck you very, very much". It felt like I was singing it to Covid-19 and all the mayhem it was causing the world.

Another example of channelling anger through music is Ramiro, from Michoacán, a west- central state in Mexico. He lives in Mexico City and

works in the film and television industry. For half of the pandemic, he went to live with his parents in a town near Morelia. Ramiro was one of the few that did not use an online platform to create his playlists. He did in the Notes application of his phone and kept checking on it throughout the interview. About his anger song, he told me he used to listen to TRUMPETS by _BY.ALEXANDER to get angry and own the feeling of injustice and inequity during the pandemic:

"I was walking the other day, and I saw lots of people without masks (In Mexico, the use of masks was encouraged to wear when in public, no matter if it was an open space). And I was angry, you know? But I know they are not the ones responsible for this. The guy washing cars with a hello kitty mask... is not his fault if he can't afford an N95 mask. It's the system. This song... It doesn't calm me down; it gives me clarity. I'm still mad, but listening to this keeps me there".

It was as if the song would help him target the frustration of the situation to something else but the people. Eve also used a song to channel her anger and frustration. She is from Mexico City, is an event planner, and lives alone with her cat. Her work heavily relies on events like weddings and private parties. During the pandemic, she had to stop working due to the cancellations of public events. Dane said that listening to this song, Blue Rose by Amen Dune, would make her angry and put her down emotionally, so she stopped listening to it after a while.

"I watched this (music) video lots of times. I sprained my foot last December, and I couldn't move; I watched and re-watched it repeatedly, but I discovered later that it would put me in a very down emotional state, and I thought, "I have to stop listening to it". But it helped me to feel angry. To say, "I'm pissed off. I'm pissed off with what is happening because I can't go out because my year got screwed off, and I am worried about everyone". So now, when I watch it, even if I like it a lot, I don't relate to that emotion so much. I sing the song, but I don't feel the anger anymore"

Another example is Emilio, his favourite place to listen to music was his car, and so that he will put this song to feel all the emotion of frustration while singing along the song "Show Me How to Live" by Audioslave.

"That song... what it unveils from me or gets like synchronised within me is that feeling of not knowing what we are doing here and why we are here in the world. And it gives me the energy to shout and sing at the same time with Chris Cornell, which is also very difficult (Emilio is a professional musician. He sings and plays different instruments. He is talking about the technique Chris Cornell uses to sing this song) and it liberates me a lot. He laughs after telling me this."

A wide range of emotions emerged across the playlists, including anger and frustration, all intersecting with the lockdown. In addition, the pandemic crossed relevant topics around injustice regarding systemic racism worldwide, specifically to black people. And within Latin America, specifically in Mexico, the issue of femicides and the poverty gap was even more apparent as the pandemic progressed. Using songs to channel and express these emotions through playlists demonstrates how participants used music to channel these emotions. If this was a place on a map, this would be one of its most visited spots.

"Anger can be a sign of moral outrage at social injustice, at being denied the right to participate fully in society" (Woodward, K., 2002, p. 206). This sentiment is reflected in the songs of some participants and my own, where anger emerged as a reaction to the pandemic's impact on vulnerable and marginalised communities, laying bare the systemic inequalities. Certain songs, such as the one Ramiro listened to, helped give a target to his frustration and anger, directing it towards systemic issues rather than individuals. By channelling our anger into music, some of us could assert our sense of injustice and express our discontent towards society.

4.4.6 Feel-good moments

As a (maybe unconscious) balance between the anger and sorrow that appeared often, our playlists also incorporate references to moments of happiness, lightness, or calm. Similar to the theme of sadness, there isn't a singular approach to using songs for these uplifting moments, although they all speak to a general sense of positivity associated with music. For example, one of the participants, Valentina, is an editor and has an independent print house in Mexico City. She lives with her partner and two dogs and spent most of the pandemic in rigorous confinement. Valentina talked about her happy song, Every Day is a Miracle, by David Byrne, as a song that reminds her of better times when we could still go to concerts. She also talks about the message of hope in the song:

"I like the act of singing along with them; I like that they remind me of things; it makes me happy listening to songs that I know very well. I like the whole album; it gives me that feeling of well-being from the concert. I think the song is beautiful, to think that we are alive. Life goes on even if we are quarantined because here we are, and we can talk with others. But the idea of being in a concert makes me feel good, or how the whole situation was cool, without overthinking (going outside). Now we can't even go out or to the store. I've started thinking about the concerts I've been to, not that I went to a lot, I don't like massive festivals either, but to the shows I go to, it's because I really want to be there, and it's great to listen to them."

Mario, a participant that already appeared in this chapter talking about internal changes, said he intentionally chose songs in his playlists that made him feel good. His song is Man is Not a Bird by Broadcast.

"I think that is what I'm most grateful about music right now, being able to travel with songs—this feeling of confinement and heaviness (in contrast) of being able to feel lightweight"

Fabia, another participant shared a song that made her feel better when

she listened to it. She lived with her whole family in an apartment in Mexico City and with 21 years old, she was the youngest in the family. Due to being prone to some respiratory sickness from a young age her mum would not let her go outside during the pandemic, so she spent most of her time inside. The song is Dorothy by Polo and Pan.

"It relaxes me (the song). You have all of this stress from so much confinement, and when I heard that song, I thought oh, *you can also feel comfortable among these moments (the pandemic); there are also enjoyable things here.*"

My feel-good song is Azotea (Rooftop in English) by singer, actress and trans communicator Luisa Almaguer. This song represents the first moment of lightness I felt after months of feeling crushed. The song is a simple story about a rooftop in a building and someone remembering a loved one while hanging out there. While at the same time describing all that lives and exists within a common rooftop in a middle-class neighbourhood in Mexico City. For me, it was linked to the nostalgia of living in my old flat in Mexico City. The rooftop (la *azotea* in Spanish) is a communal space that provides space and a sense of community for those inhabiting the building. Many of us use the rooftop to see the sunset, smoke, or drink a cup of tea; it's a way out of the apartment without going outside. This song brought back the joy to me; I remember singing it and dancing to this song for the first time in months among the boxes of furniture and clothes scattered in my new room, smiling and feeling alive.

The last song within the feel-good moment category is by Rafael. He is a fiction writer and a high school and University teacher. During the confinement, all his work was switched to remote. He leaves with his girlfriend, an internist doctor who worked during the pandemic with covid patients, and Momo, their dog. Rafael choice of song for this category intersects nostalgia with an uplifting effect that he gets from the song, Kalansnjikov by Goran Bregović

"Is from the Original Soundtrack of a movie by Emir Kusturica,

*Underground.*The soundtrack is by Goran Bregović. The music is like if it was a *banda de pueblo* (a village band) This song is on that playlist I titled 'For the uplift' (a playlist Edgar made at the beginning of the confinement to help him get hyped up). I don't know what it says; I have no idea (he laughs while he shakes his head). I spent five minutes looking for the translation, neither from Serbian to Spanish nor from Serbian to English. What I like is the explosion of energy; it's a super energetic song. We used to play that song a lot at the parties that we had with friends, and probably this has to do with the nostalgia of those get-together, of the rampage of our collective. We jumped with those songs; we threw ourselves at each other, almost like a slam. But it reminds me a lot of that. (During the pandemic) I often heard it when I went for a walk or run in the morning. I didn't know what the lyrics said; that lost its relevance; what was important was the rhythm, the intensity or that collective feeling. If you listen to it, it's a song where they sing along a lot. You can hear chaos, but it's very nice chaos. It uplifts me a lot. I suppose that this has to do with the nostalgia of the collective, with the nostalgia of the reunion and with the memories of the parties. It has to do with that very few people know it (this song), but when we play it at a party, the same group of friends who it has been preserved for more than ten years, no matter what we are doing, we stand up and start jumping, now less and less because we are already older, but if it has to do with that (he laughs a bit when saying the last sentence)"

4.4.7 Perseverance

While exploring the playlists, I observed that the participants and I often turned to songs as a source of inspiration to persevere through the lockdown. These songs vary in rhythm, lyrics, and motivations, but they all share the commonality of helping us find the inner strength to keep moving forward. Gabriel, one of the participants, used music as a means to channel courage. Gabriel is from Iztapalapa, a neighbourhood with a high contagion rate. He also is his mother's caretaker, who suffers from dementia. The context of the pandemic added an additional layer to their everyday difficulties. The song that resonated with Gabriel was

'Fear Not for Men' by Fela Kuti, an influential figure in Afrobeat music."

"At the beginning of the song, Fela Kuti said something really helpful for me: the secret of life is to have no fear, so I listened to him, and I said to myself: "Of course, of course. No fear". And that was no fear of the pandemic, but all the fears that surround us in every moment. So, it was like taking some strength".

  Gabriel

Another example of song used under this category is the one chosen by Carlos, Wolf 'Totem' by The Hu, a Mongolian folk metal band

"It is like a battle cry. (...) It was like a song just for me in the car, like a war anthem. It's a very powerful song. This is only when I am alone. When I need power, I need a punch to continue, right? I need strength because then... the deaths at home started, neighbours started to die, friends began to die. So, it was a moment when I needed a lot of drive, right? to keep on with all we were carrying. I never listened to this song with my wife or the kid; this was my song."

Another example of a song in this category is in Hector's playlist, Rid of me by PJ Harvey. He is aware of how this song makes him feel angry but also gives him drive to keep on going:

"It is the rawness of the song that shakes me off. This was (a song) about empowerment. It's the first song on the album; when I play it, I wait for it to end, and after that, I wash the dishes, sit down or do something else. It always has the function of giving strength to the body and spirit. It's a song to feel like a warrior, angry. To say, *To hell with everything. Everything is going to be all right but arrrggh!!!* (says like screaming). *It is not a 'peace and love' thing, no. It's going to be all right, but 'órale, a darle'* (This sentence is a Mexican way of saying: come on, we need to keep going)"

My song to push through was "Immigrants (we get the job done)" by Residente, Riz Ahmed and Snow Tha Product part of the Hamilton Mixtape. I still use this song these days; it's part of a musical I don't like, but it talks about the hardships of working and living in a foreign country while coming from Mexico. It was a song that gave me the last push I needed whenever I was overwhelmed or tired. Especially when I had to change my research project, it took so much effort to focus while it felt like the world was ending. I had to focus and remember why I was here and all I'd been through to get where I was. This song felt like someone from my family took me by the shoulders, looked me in the eye and told me to stand up and keep going. It worked almost every time.

During our interview, Isa explained how a particular song, I am the Resurrection by Stone Roses, empowered her to keep going her helped her feel at ease and even proud when she felt angry

"We have been here (pandemic) for over a year now, and we've gone through many stages of hope and uncertainty. This song helped me a lot with the death of my parents. My parents died in an accident when I was 15 years old, and this was a song that allowed me to be angry. At that moment, the pain can be so many things, and this was a way of being proud of the anger, hold on to it and keep on going."

I've been struggling a lot while writing this chapter. I came to Glasgow thinking everything was under control, and I just needed to focus and keep pushing to finish the PhD and move on. But listening to the songs and re-reading the interviews made me notice what I didn't want to see; this isolation time, and all the uncertainty it brings with it, is not one to brush it up and keep going. I can see how it has affected my participants, which makes me see how much it has affected me.

4.4.8 Interconnection

In almost all of the interviews, participants mentioned a song that held a connection with someone they cared about; although the way music

connected with the person varied from playlist to playlist, what the songs had in common has they held a special meaning because someone they cared about was involved. This was the main reason the song made it to the selection on their playlist. This is aligned with Boer and Abubakar's assertion that "music gives shape and receives importance by the contexts in which the listening behaviour is enacted" (Boer& Abubakar, 2014, p.02). The authors research the importance of music listening in families and peer groups and how this, in different contexts, could enhance emotional well-being. For many participants, the context was a relationship with someone they cared about, which made the song meaningful and important to them. Almost every participant's playlist held moments of listening to music with someone else or having someone in mind. I divided these moments into three subcategories about music and relationships. They can be summarised as follows:

1. A special moment is shared with someone where a particular song holds significance.
2. Songs played numerous times with someone else as a form of ritual or a special connection.
3. Songs that evoke memories of someone, whether they are present or not, reminding the participant of a connection shared.

According to Harris, Baird, Harris, and Thompson (2020), music can significantly contribute to building and strengthening relationships by promoting positive emotions, intimacy, and memories. The authors shed light on how music can be essential in connecting with others and emphasise the concept of "couple-defining songs" in their research. This concept resonates with the themes observed in this section of the study, where participants selected songs for their playlists that were linked to memorable moments with someone special, played a particular song repeatedly as a shared ritual with others, and used music as a reminder of people who may not be present physically but hold a special place in their lives.

4.4.8.1 A song and a moment shared

In many playlists, songs make it to the list due to the relevance of sharing the piece with someone else. This made the moment intertwined with the music meaningful. Now, some of these songs hold a memory linked to the pandemic and the person (or people) they shared it with. They are a one-moment thing where the music makes the moment memorable.

For this subsection, the first example is Ere. Ere is a transgender woman who, among being a writer and pedagogue, also is an artist who performs and works with primary and secondary public schools in Mexico and the public in general. Her work was deeply affected during the pandemic. When discussing her songs of the quarantine, she began with a memory of her partner on New Year's Eve.

"After midnight, he asked me to put on a song for us, and I played Nos deseo (It's a play word, where the title could mean "I wish to us" or "I desire us" in English) by Tremenda Jauría and Kumbia Queers. This song reminds me of my partner and the time we danced to it during the pandemic New Year at home, the two of us alone and in my house."

The song is a *cumbia* (a Latin American rhythm that draws from African sounds) and enters on the themes of resistance and queer love. A part of the lyrics says: T*omemos un vino por la libertad, por nosotras y por la diversidad. Por las que se han ido y por las que están* (English translation:"Let's take some wine for freedom. For us and diversity. For the ones that are no longer here and those that still remain.". This song in her playlist serves as a reminder of an important moment while reflecting her reality by choosing a love song about queer love and resistance.

The next song used as an example is from Ari, who lives in Mexico City with her family, consisting of her mum, Dad and twin siblings. During her interview, she was working on her dissertation in her final year of university. Ari shared an important moment with their grandmother when they listened to La Barca by Los Tres Caballeros. The song is a bolero, a romantic folk music genre.

"Covid makes it worse (talking about sadness and complex feelings), sometimes I was very sad, and I didn't want to talk to anyone. I didn't want to do anything but listen to music. The last time I saw my grandma, she asked if she could listen to music on her phone. So, we played some songs, and she started singing to this one. The song talks about someone having to leave but not wanting to go. After she died, listening to this song broke my heart, but I also began to find comfort in it".

Music plays a vital role in our emotional well-being and social relationships, including families and friends, and musical rituals within this context can bring emotional well- being when strengthening social bonds (Boer & Abubakar, 2014). In both of the song choices from the participants sharing the song with someone else was what made them meaningful enough to be part of the playlist. In Ere's case, sharing the music "Nos deseo" on New Year's Eve during the pandemic with her partner was a meaningful memory of sharing a moment of love and resistance in the meads of the pandemic that probably contributed to their well-being and strengthened their bond as partners. And Ari's sharing the song "La Barca" with her grandmother created a joyful memory and later became a source of containment and comfort for Ari when her grandmother passed away.

4.4.8.2 A musical ritual: one song shared with someone more than once

The following subsection is the songs that made it to the playlist due to listening to a specific piece with others often, almost as a ritual. The following examples there are the ones I consider to be particularly noteworthy in demonstrating this aspect.

Ramiro works in Mexico City, but his family lives in a town in Michoacán, a state in the west of Mexico. He went to stay with his parents during the first months of the pandemic. The song he chose is Querida by Juan Gabriel. This is a well-known song in Mexico, and the singer it's considered an important Queer figure in Mexican and Latinamerican pop

culture.

"*Querida* by Juan Gabriel -he smiles when saying this to me, became like a hymn between my parents and me. They knew I had woken up in a good mood when I played *Querida*. It didn't matter if they were doing something; I would play it out loud. And at first, it was annoying for them; it was like, "H*e does this every day!",* but by the sixth day, we were all singing it together. I listen to Juan Gabriel all the time, but *Querida* re-signified itself".

Mauro is a teacher and researcher living in a house with his partner and dad. During covid, Mauro suffered the loss of his uncle and his stepfather. He also listened to a specific song with his partner during the pandemic. He chose *Playa Girón* by Silvio Rodriguez, a musician and songwriter from Cuba, considered a symbol of the political left in Latin America.

"I wanted it to be here (on the playlist) even if it wasn't one of the most played. When you spend 8, 9 or 12 hours with the same person (referring to his girlfriend) in the same fucking room, sometimes you don't even want to talk to them. So, it's like, "Oh well, I'll play *Playa Girón*, and that's it", and it's also thematically beautiful. And there is a social commitment with the left (politically speaking), and we are situated there".

Another song that falls under this umbrella is the one by Carlos, Sky full of stars by the band Coldplay. He shared with me that this song was already important before the pandemic but its significant deepened during the lockdown.

"This song is super special to me because it is my son's song. Since he was in the belly, we played this song for him. When he was a baby, if we played it on, he would stop crying. It is a song that is constantly being played at home because of him. He likes it, and it puts him in a calm mood. It came out of nowhere; it's a song that has been very meaningful.

The DJ unknowingly played this song when we got out of the car at our wedding. So, I liked it before that, but after he played it there, it became something like *wow*. And then we played it on the baby in the belly and moved. I have a video where he is bawling, and I play it with him, and he calms down. This song became a flagship in my house. It could be on my ringtone, it could be everywhere, it's a song that is everywhere, and it reminds me of my son.

The last song of this section is from Gabriel. He chose "Solamente una vez", (English translation: Only once) a romantic bolero originally sung by Pedro Infante, a renowned singer and actor from the Golden Age of Mexican Cinema.

"Before (the pandemic), I had other moments when I wasn't on duty care all day. But at this moment, it is 24 hours all around. When things get difficult, I play music that my mom liked and that calms her down (and therefore calms me down). *Solamente una vez* is a key song in this pandemic and in my mother's dementia process because it is a song that she knows by heart. It's sort of an anchor, it grounds her. It's a key song for our mental stability here at home".

I get emotional at any moment while weaving the songs of my participants with mine. And visiting memories through songs and their interviews, I've been wiping my tears while writing this. Fortunately, on and off, I had been contained with therapy. I have worked through this in my sessions, and in parallel with my supervisors, that doing autoethnography for this research is the way it feels more organic; before choosing this approach, I tried processing my participants' interviews and playlist in different ways, but none of them felt aligned with what I was going through at the moment. The more I tried to distance myself from my participants, the more lost and adrift I felt with the process. My PhD dissertation was important before, but now it has another layer where I do my best to tell our (participants and me) stories. And when talking about the lockdown with the participants, I can see how complicated it was for them and me to go through these

moments. I told a friend the other day that, in a way, it felt like I was still on lockdown. While writing this work, I've been revisiting all these songs and feelings and seeing how much it has changed us. In the meantime, the world is trying to move on without much recognition of how much it has affected us through all of this.

4.4.8.3 Songs that remind them of someone else

The following songs made it to my participant playlist through associated them with the memory of someone they love. Among those, I chose to share the ones that, in addition to the memory, the pandemic gave them another meaning. For instance, Valentina chose Eres by Café Tacvba; the band is from Mexico City and is one of Latin America's most representative rock bands.

"I chose this song because it reminds me a lot of my dad, he passed away two years ago, and since the pandemic started, I've been thinking a lot about him. His illness was part of the respiratory tract, and surely, with covid, he would have died, and it would have been very sad because we have seen how people die alone (with covid). It's the only sad song out of the five (of the playlist), but it was important to me. The memory of my dad is important".

Hector chose Marieta by Ibrahim Ferrer, a Cuban musician well known for being a part of the "Buena Vista Social Club" musical project.

"This song is in the playlist because of my friends -he smiles while saying this, specifically for one of them. I could say that he has become my best friend. Mauricio is a big fan of Buenavista; Mauricio and Mario... the three of us met in high school, and they are the most constant friends I have had in my life. So, listening to Ibrahim refers me to my friends. Specifically, to Mauricio, who has become my best friend".

And finally, Rafael is a writer and a high school and University teacher. During the confinement, all his work was switched to remote. He leaves

with his partner, an internist doctor who worked during the pandemic with covid patients and their dog. Rafael talks about redefining a song (Strawberry Fields Forever by The Beatles) because of the pandemic.

"This has to do with a specific moment; at the end of April, Laura was infected (with covid). She is an internist working in two public hospitals simultaneously. At the end of April, on the 20th, she gets it. Laura noticed it very quickly, so much so that I didn't get it. If I had gotten it, we were sure the disease would develop with some severity if I got infected, or I would probably not survive it. We had to isolate ourselves at home; she didn't leave the bedroom, and we stayed like that for fourteen days. It is a song that reminded me of her when I listened to it, and I included it because it was an intense moment of crisis, right? of uncertainty. Apparently, it was a matter of poor equipment at the Seguro Social (an equivalent of the NHS in Mexico City) because she knew that she had done everything necessary to prevent it from happening, but it happened anyway. The meaning of the song shifted. Even this, the act of verbalising it and revaluing it, in the end, will create an unconscious or subconscious mark. When I listen to it, I will remember this".

The last example of this category is from Mauro, who chose a song that reminded him of a friend who lives far from him. The song is titled Nostalgia, by the Norwegian band Ulver:

"The one that follows is from Ulver, that album came out last year, Ulver is also like...oh this playlist is very personal, I'm noticing it now. Ulver is a Norwegian band that used to be death metal, and now it's like dark ambient folk. I didn't know them, about ten years ago one of my best friends told me *'Listen to this incredible band they never play live'* and then every time they release an album, he sends it to me. And we discussed it this year, it's strange because I haven't seen him in a year or so. (...) More than anything (this song is here) is because of being fan of the band and the album, and a little bit also the memory of my friend. We have discussed it over WhatsApp a bit, but the problem in my case is that I hardly like to talk on the phone. I hate talking on the phone. If I

spend two hours a day giving classes (online), I don't want to talk to anyone anymore. It would also be a bit like nostalgia (listening to this song)".

Some participants developed a ritual of sharing songs with others as a way to create a sense of closeness during times of uncertainty and isolation. This ritual fostered closeness and became a source of comfort. Studies on music and social bonding have shown that sharing knowledge about a familiar song with others can promote interpersonal closeness (Stupacher, Mikkelsen, & Vuust, 2021). In many ways, the act of sharing music with someone else served as a ritual, a way of creating a memory or marking a moment in time. As well as a connection to someone else. For the participants who used the songs in these ways, music became a source of peace, joy and connection amidst the difficult times of the pandemic.

4.4.9 Collective Experience: The way we experienced the lockdown

During the interviews, there were many instances where laughter and humour served as a means of connection, enabling us to discuss complex topics such as the loss of a family member or the uncertainty we faced. We found ourselves laughing at things that should have been sad, and in retrospect, I realised that sharing those moments with others was incredibly healing for me (although I only fully grasped this while writing my dissertation), and I believe it was the same for some of the participants as well. Some participants expressed how meaningful it was to share their playlists with me, like Mario, who described the act of sharing his playlist during our interview as a therapeutic experience. For this category, I divided the moments into two:

1. Songs connected with the lockdown experience

2. The perceived idea of the pandemic

4.4.9.1 Songs Connected to the lockdown experience

Every participants' playlist (and mine) reflects their pandemic experience. It is a space, a time capsule crafted by their memories, emotions and reflection of what everyone was experiencing during this time —a pre-vaccine pandemic, where there was still so much uncertainty, but also hope, in the air. The playlist as a unit tells a unique story crafted through our music preferences, experiences and overlapping identities. But within the playlists, some songs were chosen to reflect and explain to me (and themselves) how they experienced their everyday life during the lockdown, not the global pandemic but the personal one behind closed doors.

For example, Dane. She has fibromyalgia, a long-term condition that causes chronic pain, among other symptoms that don't allow her to move independently. As a result, Dani spends most of her time in bed and moves in a wheelchair or a cane. Dani is queer and polyamorous, with partners in different cities, and the lockdown has not allowed them to visit her, which has been challenging. When talking about the songs on the playlist, she also talks about her lockdown experience. The song she chose to talk about lockdown is Oom Sha La La by Haley Heynderickx. A happy melody that contrasts the song's lyrics about existential doubts.

"I like it because it talks about the routine at home. Quarantine as such is not something new for me. My lifestyle was called quarantine and lockdown, I'm just finding out about it, she tells me sarcastically. This quarantine has meant double or triple confinement for me. My capacities are variable, sometimes I can't move, or even talk. And there are days I can do almost everything; but with the pandemic, even on the *good days*, I have to stay inside. I stopped receiving visits, and this has been very heavy and sad for me".

My lockdown song was "Las tumbas" (The graves in English translation) by Ismael Rivera. It's a salsa song, emblematic of the contrast between the rhythm and the lyrics, which can sometimes be very dark. I would dance to it singing "*De las tumbas quiero irme no sé cuándo pasará. Las tumbas*

son pa' los muertos y de muerto no tengo na'" ("I want to leave these graves; I don't know when it will happen. The graves are for the dead, and I'm not dead at all" in English). This song resonated with me during isolation, and having such a fitting piece to dance and sing along with was of great help.

Other participants also had songs that encapsulated their own lockdown experiences. For instance, Ari, who lives with her family (consisting of her mom, dad, and twin sisters) in a small apartment, shared her connection to the song "Monotonia" (Monotony) by The Growlers.

"The chorus tells you everything: *la monotonía es un asesino lento* (monotony is a slow murderer). They sing this part in Spanish (the rest of the song is in English). It describes what we are living now. Every day, you get up, attend classes, help with the chores and make dinner, and the day ends. This routine was going on every day, so I put it on the playlist".

Lastly, La Bamba by Los Lobos, a song that Rafael chose to put on the playlist to talk about the pandemic in Mexico. He shared with me his thoughts about it

"I believe that this issue of the pandemic is a collective issue and that it has affected the community and that it has had an ambiguous problem, not ambiguous... contradictory one, perhaps it's the word. In terms of that, people have been incredibly supportive of certain things, but it has also been very unconscious to others. (...) To me, this particular song has to do with the Mexican identity. With what Mexico is and how Mexican society has reacted to all of this. And how on the one hand, it makes you proud that people are very empathetic... There is a whole polarity of blaming the authorities and all and of course; no one can take responsibility away from them because they were chosen to carry out a duty. But on the other hand, the society (Mexican society) as a nation has had some very horrendous behaviour. At the end of the year, we didn't go to Laura's mother's house or my parents'. We spent all our

holidays here because Laura (a doctor attending Covid-19 cases in the Public Hospitals in Mexico) was very clear about keeping isolation so a new wave (of new COVID-19 contagious) wouldn't't come. Seeing people not being responsible and going to parties and in the street caused me a very particular sensation of misanthropy, very deep. Because, well, in the end, when Laura returned to work... and the stories (about her patients sick with Covid-19) she told me. And she was like, 'well, maybe they asked for it and everything' as a way of hiding the frustration but in the end, she was always like 'the patient is very critical' and worried and sad about them. Laura would say to me: *people don't understand that everything is very serious and that there are no more hospitals, and we are already tired.* Right now, they are exhausted; the doctors I know from their entire circle are tired."

I remember the last night I went out before the lockdown was put in place, I went out to see a stand-up show, and it didn't feel quite ok to be outside, but it was more the need to keep on with the normality of life until it wasn't possible. There was this weirdness and an unsettling feeling in the ambience. There was a tense underlying feeling even when some jokes were about the covid situation. On my way back home, the lyrics of this song (We should be holding hands by Blond Redhead) *kept on playing in my head: "There are people saying: It's going to be a long, long night, so we should be holding hands". It felt like dark times were coming, and the idea of finding shelter in each other kept returning to me. The lockdown in Scotland began two days after.*

4.4.9.2 The perceived idea of the pandemic

While doing the interviews, many of my participants talked about the feeling of Covid-19 stopping life on its tracks as we knew it, globally. And how we were all processing this experience. It's important to notice the interviews were within nine months since the pandemic started. We were still trying to understand the magnitude of events unfolding around us; the vaccine was only a promise, and new information about the virus emerged daily. Although the experiences were different in Mexico and

Scotland, there was a general idea of how the pandemic affected the world. This showed up on the playlists, too. Mario, for example, chose the song Nobody by Mitski to talk about the pandemic. Mitski is a Japanese American singer-songwriter. She is within the alternative- indie music genre. *Nobody* is an upbeat, happy tune contrasting with the longing and sad lyrics about loneliness.

"Surely that was the song of the pandemic. It's a super sad song. Although this song is very energetic. There is something that she says that she has to open the windows to hear the noise of people because she hasn't spoken to anyone for a while (note: the artist doesn't sing about not speaking to anyone in the song) and I think that also happened to us, like there were moments of the day when I sent an audio and my voice was like that. (He reenacts a cough and then he says) *Shit I haven't said a word all day.* All of this seems very crazy to me. really like social interaction, I love going to the office and talking to the secretary and the boss, and also at university I like to go talk to my classmates. I felt that the most interesting thing happened in the classrooms, going to a smoke break together. And all that is over now we are people seeing each other's faces in two hours of online classes. I kind of disconnected from the classes. I still do it because I got the scholarship. But I'm not enjoying it online. Last semester I saved it by taking a lot of self-portraits and with my roommates I made a photoshoot with them on the roof."

Samuel talks about the political context at that moment, especially the 8M (the way Mexican media called International Women's Day) and links them with the song *White Room* by Cream.

"These are also the walls I'm on now; all the walls are white (referring to his flat). There was a lot of political effervescence in this environment; people valued their rights even more though they could cost them their lives. Surely, many women who march on 8M will die not because the government does something but because of covid. They assume that the freedom they can acquire with those marches is more important than

life itself. I think that makes it valuable, more valuable than a protest in any other environment".

While I write certain parts of this chapter (like this one about the pandemic), there is a knot in my throat. If I suspected it before, now it is clear how music can make me travel to the moment I connect with a song. So, I have in the background my playlist of the lockdown while I write (and I listen to the playlists of this chapter when I go for walks or errands), and when the song appears, I can see myself during the moments I was listening to that song. Right now, it's Pink Rabbits by The National.

4.4.10 Post-pandemic future (coping with uncertainty)

The fourth and last moment chosen for this chapter is a reflection I consider not just the participant, and I had gone through during this pandemic but almost everyone. It is about the future and how we conceived the world might be after the pandemic. The future for me, someone who lost both parents to Covid-19, seems foggy. I am still trying to see far ahead. Making plans for 'normality' means existing in a world without my parents, and the thought of this is still overwhelming. The future seems like walking in the middle of dense fog. You can see only what is in front of you and go step by step. The next task: finish this chapter. After that: complete the PhD, and hopefully, by that time, the fog will be gone.

I listened to the song 'A Comma' by Serpentwithteeth a lot during December 2020. The song became a wish for the year to come. One part of the song sings: L*ife's gotta get easier, can't carry a heavy heart into another year. No heavy hearts in my next yea*r. As a form of prayer, I repeated that part with my eyes closed many times during the winter. I was struggling to face my first holidays without my mum, and the Scottish winter was dark and cold, and it felt even worse during the lockdown. I remember returning to that song in shock the day my father

died, not believing this was happening again. When I was celebrating with my friends just days ago that 2020 was over, and I thought all the bad things were behind me. My sense of future and logic got lost when I faced another loss, and I am still slowly working on it.

The feeling of longing and uncertainty was also present in Isa's playlist; she chose 'Subterranean Homesick Alien' by Radiohead to explain her feelings about the future. She shared her process of this song intertwined with the pandemic as follows:

"*Homesick*" is clearly a song about longing. I think this song longs so much for something that is already impossible to recover. That is normality. This thing we used to have no longer exists and will never exist. Because, when we come back, however, we come back from this... Let's just say this will stay with us for a long time, and [long silence] ... Reality always goes in a spiral, right? I mean, it curves back by the same spot, but it is on another level, right? So, it's like this loop on a spiral. Our reality will look a bit like the one we had before, but it will never be the same. (When we come back from lockdown) there are going to be so many people missing, so many people who lost their jobs and had to start over doing something else. The world changed so much. It is not like the homesickness of a place but of a moment".

Isa knew what she was talking about when she referred to 'homesickness of a moment' because, as she shared during the interview, Isa lost her parents in a car accident when she was 17. She knew the darkness of such immense loss and how reality is never the same after losing someone you love. Her empathy towards others, considering people who have lost someone during the pandemic, connected directly to me. I felt like she was explaining what I have been feeling all this time with the loss of my parents: life will never be the same, although, on the outside, it could look like it. I did her interview just weeks after losing my dad, and I struggled to put my thoughts about the future into words. Everyone was talking about the new normality; a vaccine was in the making; it seemed that hope was all around for everyone but me. Listening to Isa

talk about this spiral of reality helped me understand my fear of the unknown future.

But there were other perspectives of what awaited us after the lockdown. Mar, another participant in the project, chose a song titled 'Clase M' by Niña Tormenta to think about the future as a promise or place to do better.

"This time of lockdown, or whatever we call it, maybe let us consider new things that haven't been thought of or even conceived. I do believe that hope can come from imagination and creation. (The song) gave me a lot of strength and allowed me to say, '*ok, come on, there is an opportunity; a new thing can come from here.*"

Mar quit her job during the pandemic, realising she was in a toxic work environment. The pandemic gave her the time to reflect on herself and what she wanted from life. She had the means and liberty to pause and use this moment to assess her life. Several of my friends and people around me reacted similarly to Mar. They quit their jobs, broke up with their long-term partners, and moved cities during those first months. I also noticed those changes in some participants; some underwent break-ups or changed jobs. What Isa said about new, not-quite-the-same normality happened to many of us. Some, like Mar, had the means to choose that moment as an opportunity to reflect on a better future. I am aware that many people in Mexico did not have the opportunity to make choices like this and were compelled to continue working, facing the difficult decision between earning a living and prioritising their safety. Some members of my family and dear friends experienced the hardship of going to work, using public transport, and adhering to their employers' mandates while navigating numerous challenges during the pandemic. A close example is my sister, who, despite her efforts, was initially denied time off by her employer to visit our mum. After advocating for several days of unpaid leave, she finally secured permission to travel. That morning while she was flying back to Chiapas, our mum passed away.

My experience and Mar's experience of the lockdown were quite different. She was full of hope and certainty for the future; I was tired and scared. But her faith and hope, even if almost too light for me, woke up a certain warmness in me. A desire that maybe I could also feel hope for what was ahead when the fog settled.

Through the words of Nere, the participant who shared her New Year's Eve song with me, I discovered an accurate explanation of the process of making this lockdown playlist. Towards the end of our interview, Nere said something that resonated with me deeply:

"The act of making this playlist is fascinating because it allows me to find myself on another level through music. These songs belong to different moments and emotions in my life, marking diverse affective connections. They resonate with multiple people, connecting us beyond our individuality. I chose these songs for a reason; they kept me company and now also carry the weight of the pandemic."

Nere's view of the songs as changing entities capable of shifting according to the spaces and moments, resonated deeply with me. The songs in my playlist have also taken on new meaning by providing solace during the pandemic. Just like Nere, they simultaneously fragment and unite my experiences. Through the process of creating the playlist, I slowly put all the scattered events in one space in my mind. Now, they had a home within the playlist, easily accessible whenever I desired.

Creating my 'lockdown playlist' allowed me to reflect on the critical moments that have shaped me into who I am today. It empowered me to choose the narrative approach that felt most authentic, whether it was through chronological sequencing or highlighting significant moments. This self-reflection was equally valuable for the participants, as they expressed how meaningful it was to create their own playlists and revisit the songs. Hagen N. (2015) highlights the various factors that come into play when making a playlist, such as mood, emotions, making sense of

things, and personal experiences. These considerations were evident in the playlist creation process of the participants, including myself, as we sought to curate meaningful collections of songs.

In this case, the intention behind creating the lockdown playlist was to foster sharing and discussion with others, transforming the exercise into a social interaction. As highlighted in Hagen's research on playlists in music streaming services, those curated with memories or biographical themes aid users in mastering their sense of self (Hagen, 2015, p. 642). The participants' willingness to share their songs and reflections on the pandemic not only allowed me to understand their experiences but also provided me with deeper insights into my own, as van Dijck notes when discussing the connection between autobiographical and social memory (van Dijck, 2006, p. 354).

Playlists can help us make sense of our stories, and while we made lists individually, the act of sharing transformed it into collective action. Making the playlist was like telling a story, first to ourselves and then to those we chose to share it with. After creating the playlist for this research, I gained a clearer understanding of how the events of the lockdown unfolded in my life.

Furthermore, after the participants shared their songs and reflections with me, I grew a sense of belonging and companionship. Through this study, I hope to contribute to our understanding of how music, particularly the process of making a playlist and the act of sharing it, can help us make sense of challenging experiences, individually and collectively.

4.5 Individual Analysis Leading to Collective Themes

Before identifying the thematic intersections, I individually engaged with each participant's playlist and interview. I carefully listened to each playlist, noting how the songs were selected and the narratives shared

during the interviews. This approach allowed me to understand the journeys and narratives of each participant before uncovering the broader patterns that connected our experiences.

I listened to the 25 playlists and interviews from participants over six months and understood their stories and how they were coping with the lockdown through the dialogue we had while they explained to me the process of the playlists. I could see how some of them, like Mario and Mar, used their playlists also to understand the significant changes they were going through, like quitting their job or going through a break-up within the context of the lockdown. Alternatively, how the youngest of my participants, most of them full-time students, had to deal with their agency lessen (not being able to go out of the house, having to contribute with household chores, abiding by their parents' and other adults' rules) and the way music was a survival tool for it. The same happened with the participants dealing with grief or the loss of a loved one during the pandemic; their playlists were filtered with this experience and process, and the reflections of the lockdown and the post-pandemic future were shaped through it.

My primary aim was to connect the common threads that emerged across participants. I got there by analysing each playlist and interview, which allowed me to uncover recurring themes related to our shared experiences of the lockdown. The playlists played a central role in understanding how we processed these challenges.

The thematic moments presented in this chapter, therefore, are a synthesis of individual stories, rooted in careful analysis of each participant's playlist. They contribute to a collective narrative and perspective. That, while grounded in individual experiences, highlights the broader connections that emerged between our different lockdown stories.

4.6 Summary

To summarise, this chapter studies into a comprehensive study exploring how music was used during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. Employing thematic analysis and an auto- ethnographic approach, I categorised the emerging moments to find common patterns and connections between the participants' experiences and mine. I refined the categories to 10 that best captured the essence of the lockdown experience. These categories included togetherness, internal changes, grief, *tristear* (feeling sadness), anger, feel-good moments, perseverance, interconnection, the lockdown experience, and the post-pandemic future.

In this chapter, I focused on discovering how the participants and I created a playlist to describe how we experienced the pandemic through music. I research into participants' experiences as they selected songs that resonated with their experience and facilitated the processing of emotions such as joy, grief and anger. The chapter underscores the role of music in providing solace and comfort, especially in times of isolation.

I investigate how music served as an emotional outlet during the lockdown and how the playlists provide a glimpse into the curation or intentional selection of songs that allowed us to channel our emotions. Throughout the chapter, I reflect on the significance of playlists in navigating the challenges of the pandemic, drawing insights from participants' experiences and mine. I openly discuss the challenges encountered during the research journey, including moments of burnout and the loss of my parents, how these experiences impacted my research and how I approached it.

In addition to the research findings, I share my connection to the research as I embarked on writing the dissertation while simultaneously healing from personal losses. I consider this to add depth to the exploration of music as a way of processing experiences as I navigated my emotional landscape alongside the participants' journeys. The

intertwining of personal experiences and academic analysis brings to the table a different form to keep on the understanding of the possibilities of using music in a specific context, such as the pandemic.

Combining these various perspectives and insights, I aim to highlight the role of music in providing solace, fostering resilience, and creating a safe space from a collective perspective. Moreover, I strive to show how the act of sharing playlists can serve as a catalyst for a deeper understanding of our personal experiences while at the same time fostering connections and a sense of belonging and mutual understanding. Through this exploration, the chapter demonstrates the ability and possibilities of music to transcend individual experiences and forge collective narratives.

In the next chapter, I will explore the integration of my study's findings with the broader literature. My study involves establishing connections between my research and existing scholarly work, uncovering fresh perspectives that contribute to collective knowledge. This chapter will allow me to connect my personal experiences with the research findings and shed light on the broader implications of my study. By engaging in a dialogue between my work and the existing literature, I hope to contribute to the ongoing conversation among these subjects and provide directions for future investigations.

Chapter 5. Discussion

5.1 Introduction

During a time when physical distance became the norm, our everyday routines were disrupted, and communal gatherings were replaced with solitude; for a lot of us, music emerged as a lifeline, a tool or even a language to translate what we were feeling and transcend our isolation by offering us solace, connection and hope. This chapter studies the realm of lockdown playlists, exploring the emotional geographies and pat- terns that emerged during this extraordinary period. By examining the significance of playlists as cultural artefacts, personal narratives, and agents of transformation, this chapter uncovers how music shaped our experiences, fostered resilience and helped us regulate our emotions. It also explores how creating a playlist of the lockdown gave us a sense of agency and aided us in processing our experiences. Sharing the playlist with someone else gave us a sense of not being alone through these grim times while al- lowing us to bear witness and contain each other's experiences. Through exploring these shared narratives, and connections through sharing our playlists, there was a discovery of a deep connection throughout our experiences and the role music played in our lives during the lockdown associated with the pandemic.

Recognising the transformative potential of music and the unique role that playlists played in shaping our lockdown experiences, this research delves into the intimate relationship between music, playlists, and human emotions. While exploring the emotional landscapes, personal narratives, and shared meanings embedded within lockdown playlists, I underlined the ways in which music became a lifeline, a source of resilience, and a tool for self-discovery during this extraordinary period. Through this study I uncovered the individual stories and emotions intertwined within these playlists and music as a means of collective expression and connection. Through the dialogue ignited by the playlists and interviews I engaged with the stories, emotions, and connections woven within these musical compilations, and shed light on the different

ways music enriched our lives during the lockdown. Which also offered insights into the broader implications for understanding human experience in times of adversity.

In the following sections of this chapter, I present the research objectives and the findings that emerged from exploring our lockdown playlists and collective narratives.

As mentioned before, this project was planned differently in 2018, but it had to be up- dated as a direct response to the pandemic. As a result, the fieldwork took place online, and the recruitment process was through two social media platforms. Instagram, Face- book, and I were also referred to other people by some participants after their inter- views. Between November 2020 and February 2021, I conducted 25 online interviews with participants in Mexico City between 21 and 43 years old who identified as transgender women, women and men. I used an open-ended narrative structure to allow participants to freely share their experiences the way they wanted and feel agency in how they choose to tell their stories. While being aware of the vulnerable situation we were all going through and the distinct challenges each of us were facing. This approach was influenced by different studies that reflected on the importance of locating the participants front and centre of the interview process considering the context and the power dynamic is always implicit in interviews where the research is wrongly perceived as the one with the authority and knowledge to conduct the interview, when is the participants the one holding all the knowledge of their experience (Pederson, S. N., 2013. Guenette, F., & Marshall, A. 2009. Cheryl, M. 2000). I used Music Elicitation as a tool to promote active participation from the interviewees. This approach allows participants to articu late the significance of their personal histories, cultures, and backgrounds (Porr et al., 2011). The format they wished to do was free (a list on a piece of paper, YouTube, Spotify, among other platforms); the only request was for the playlist to be between 5 and 10 songs, or they could also bring a playlist already created by the same subject. All participants, except one, made their playlists exclusively for the

interview.

To summarise, I approached my research using a cross-perspective methodological framework. Specifically, I used a Narrative approach, which involved conducting inter- views and using music to elicit my participants' experiences.

To analyse and make sense of the interviews and connect the participants' lockdown experience with mine, I used Autoethnography. The mix of methodologies was needed due to the ongoing pandemic and the individual challenges I was experiencing during that time. As mentioned before, the ethnographic approach was an organic adaptation looking to make sense of the participants' playlists and lockdown experiences that were close to my experience, too. After finishing the interviews, I weaved my experience and playlist of the lockdown with theirs. While listening, transcribing and translating their interviews, I got to pay attention to details that might have slipped away on a first lis- ten.

Chapter 5 focuses on the four Key Findings (KFs) of my study. In Section 5.2, I discuss each of these Key Findings in detail, starting with Key Finding 1. KF1 explores the process of creating playlists as a form of reflective storytelling (Section 5.2.1). Following on to KF2 (Section 5.2.2), which highlights the transformative power of sharing playlists and how creating and sharing our playlists fostered connection and empathy, especially during the pandemic. KF3 (Section 5.2.3) examines how playlists served as a means for the participants and me to be witnesses of each other lockdown experience. Finally, KF4 (Section 5.2.4) discusses the role of playlists as dynamic maps of emotional spaces, trac- ing the intersecting journeys of diverse lockdown playlists. I then summarise our findings in Section 5.3, which encapsulates the Key Findings and their contribution to the broad- er themes and Research Questions of my study.

5.2 Four Key Findings

In the previous chapter, the following categories emerged as significant topics of discus- sion: togetherness, internal changes, loss, sadness (*tristear*), anger, feel-good moments, perseverance, interconnection, and the overall impact of the lockdown experience.

Throughout the chapter, I analysed the playlists and participant interviews, after months of immersing myself in the participants playlists, closely examining them alongside the interviews and relevant literature, the analysis generated four Key Findings (KF). These findings are presented in a logical progression of the research:

1. **KF1.Playlist Creation Process as Reflective Storytelling:**
   Participants engaged in the process of curating lockdown playlists, which involved selecting songs that held personal significance. Through sharing and discussing with me their playlists, they en- gaged in reflective storytelling, gaining insights into their lockdown experience. This finding emphasises the role of the playlists as a medium of self-reflection, connection, and belonging as the act of sharing playlists created space to talk with me about our lockdown experiences and reflections about the lockdown, providing a sense of under- standing during a time of isolation.

2. **KF2. Connection, Empathy, and Transformative Power of Sharing Playlists:** Sharing and discussing playlists created a channel for empathy and connection between participants and me. The act of reflective storytelling through the creation of the playlists, followed by the act of sharing such playlists, served as an opportunity for a sense of belonging, of not being the only one experiencing hardship during this challenging experience.

3. **KF3. Bearing witness to the Lockdown Experience:** The act of sharing and listening to the stories behind the playlist and bearing witness to participants' narratives provided validation and support. Holding space for each other when sharing moments of the lock- down

contributed to acknowledging diverse experiences and voices that emerged during the lockdown.

4. **KF4. Playlists as Maps of Emotional Spaces:** Intersections of Music, Lockdown Experi ences, and Emotional Landscapes: The patterns I found within the playlists offer insights into the emotional spaces we inhabited during the lockdown. These patterns can serve as a map of our journeys, visually representing the lockdown's emotional landscape. Exploring these playlists revealed shared themes, emotions, and key moments that intersected with our experiences during the lockdown. Laughter, grief, self-discovery, and love (among others) emerged as common threads woven throughout our playlist narratives, uncovering the collective nature of our lockdown experiences. The playlists reflect the individual emotional geographies and map our journeys through the lockdown's emotional terrain. A figure of the map can be found in Section 5.2.4, Figure 5.1 *Map of our Lockdown Experience.*

5.2.1 KF1: Playlist Creation Process as Reflective Storytelling

In Chapter 4, findings, I studied the process of playlist creation, uncovering the layers involved in selecting songs that held personal significance for participants and me. This rich background sets the stage for KF1, which answers the RQ1 focusing in the process behind the creation of playlists curated specifically for the research study, going deeper into the overarching Playlist Creation Process as Reflective Storytelling. While the ten categories identified provide a comprehensive framework for understanding various aspects of the playlist creation journey, KF1 takes a holistic approach. Instead of focusing specifically on each one of these categories, I shift the spotlight to the aspects of the Playlist Creation Process.

The decision to centre the attention in this finding to the overarching process stems from the participants' narratives, highlighted in the

reflection shared by Nere in Chapter 4. Her insights resonate deeply with the works of DeNora (2000), who notes that music serves as a cultural resource for self-construction, emotional work, and the formation of memories and biographies. Nere's reflections capture the essence of playlist creation as more than a categorisation task; it is an act of self-expression and introspection:

"Each song has its emotional nuance, its affective nuance and its nuance of memory of what resonates and reminds me. If you play those songs (the ones mentioned during the interview), I will remember many things from before and during the quarantine. Let's see what songs will make me remember the quarantine afterwards."

Nere told me that going through all the songs helped her discover more about herself through music. It was the same for me, going through my lockdown experience and discover which moments were meaningful enough to made it to the list was also a process of carefully dismounting the whole experience through songs and then take the significant parts and create a clearer version of my experience with them. As she described the process of sitting with me and talking about her significant songs of the pandemic, assembling the songs felt like gathering fragments of herself within each track, representing many moments and emotions lived through the pandemic. These songs, she emphasised, held a significant connection to specific situations. Some of them even gained another layer of meaning in her personal history while listening to them in the context of the pandemic.

Nere's experience about making her playlist, which echoes mine, sheds light on the intersection between music, identity, and memory during the playlist creation process. It provides insight into how the process of the playlist creation was a process of self-re- flection, emotional expression, and ultimately connecting with others.

In her work "Music as a Technology of the Self", DeNora (2007) argues that music is a cultural resource that individuals use for their own self-

construction, emotional memory and biographical work, which is always in progress. Creating a playlist that enclosed our lockdown experience and engaging with music during the pandemic was part of an ongoing work of self-construction at a specific moment. Curating the playlists by choosing a song was an act of emotional processing and self-reflection on the lockdown experience. It allows the participants and me to link certain songs to particular moments or feelings.

Nere's remark about finding herself on another level through music resonates with DeNora's argument that individuals utilise music as a cultural resource for self-construction, emotional work, and the formation of memories and biographies (DeNora, 2000). She chose those songs for a reason. She said those songs were the ones that helped her go through the pandemic. This reflection also happened at different moments to all the participants and me; as DeNora states, we mobilised music and engaged in private forms of human-music interaction to navigate the challenges and emotions of the lockdown experience.

When discussing the Playlist Creation Process, I refer to the activities and steps involved in crafting or curating the playlist. This includes the decision-making process, song selection, the order of the songs, choosing titles for each playlist (if they decided to put a title on them), and any other aspect taken into account when creating this playlist.

During the process of making our playlists, we all went through the steps of reflecting and going through the songs, making preliminary lists and then cutting down or adding a song that reminded us of a specific moment. This is a process that in different ways we (participants and me) all went through. Hector, one of the participants (as mentioned in Chapter 4, Findings) told me he made a preliminary list on a piece of paper with a pen- cil. Then, after making the appropriate corrections, he wrote the final list of songs in his journal with ink. He wanted to preserve that list somewhere special. Furthermore, the title of his list was "Ten songs for the quarantine (so far)" his remark on the temporality adjective of "so far" highlighted that (at the moment of making the

playlist) since we were still in the middle of the pandemic, Hector said to me when referring to the title: "Maybe there will be more songs, who knows how long this will last (to go back to a certain normality)". The title of his playlist already showed the moment we were at that time, a pre-vaccine world with lots of uncertainty. He was not sure if the list of songs he listened to during lockdown would go longer. Some participants named their playlists very directly, like "Pandemia" or "P2020." Others will go to a more figurative space, naming them "Prisma" or "Antropausa" (a wordplay from Antro: Man, and Pausa: Pause or stop). Hagen, whose work has been more focused on streaming and sharing playlists, has also conducted thorough research with in-depth interviews about creating, curating and maintaining playlists online. When discussing the making of playlists, Hagen notes that naming the playlists can serve as a hook or anchor among the vast universe regarding the collection of songs or the purpose of the playlist (Hagen, 2015).

This happened at different levels to the participants and me. As mentioned, I created a playlist at the beginning of lockdown: "The Last Night on Earth (Music in Times of Rona and isolation)". Loosely based on a short story written by Ray Bradbury)." I created this playlist on March 12th, 2020. This playlist was more about what I suspected the pandemic would be or feel like, songs under the subject of isolation and uncertainty but also hope. As also explained in the Findings chapter, I created another playlist, the one that emerged from everyday life and listening during the lockdowns according to how I was feeling and what I was going through with my grief(s), which was the one I ended up using for this research. I named it "Playlist de Cuarentena(s)" ("Quarantine(s)' playlist" translated in English), using the extra *s* as a way of explaining to myself the way I felt so far: that I had been through different lockdowns and different experiences during that time.

There is also the way where and how the playlists were made. While some participants used pen and paper to create the playlist, I used a hybrid approach of writing down all the songs on paper and then deciding on the final songs online. There were other approaches, like

using a streaming platform like Spotify. Two other participants used You-Tube for specific reasons: her experience was linked with the visual content or YouTube paying a better fee to the musicians than other platforms (this participant was a musician himself). There were also three more who wrote it on a piece of paper or their phone, and then Nere, an artist and storyteller who used to perform and use oral story-telling, who made the playlist while talking with me as if she was telling me a story, recollecting moments while talking about her experience lockdown to me.

Every playlist process was unique, and it showed that making the playlist was like telling a story in a way that made sense, first to us and then to those we chose to share it with. During the interviews, we talked about the internal logic of their playlists, the approach they took to choose the songs in the playlists, and the reasons behind those choices will vary from person to person. As Hagen (2015) suggests, different internal log-ic or systems in place, like mood, feelings, memories, and biographical history, can be used as tools in making a playlist. Moreover, these logics or systems can help assess and analyse which songs to include in the playlist. In the case of this research, some proceed to do it in chronological order, others would do it by how many times they listened to a song, and others, like Majo, would say that the playlist would be a summary of her feelings about 2020 and 2021:

"The order is not chronological, rather what it is, perhaps it's like certain tones and flows. I kind of feel that the year started like we were all in a partying mood (like vacation wise) but then, I don't really know how there is sudden kind or rupture. Two songs are very *perreo (*meaning the rhythm are suitable to dance), and the following is (a song with) a man with a guitar. I remember that I put this song there because I thought that's how my year was. That is how this ended up being. We were all in a frenzy, and suddenly it was like I needed a man with a guitar to tell me, 'Everything will be fine. Don't worry, we'll get out of this', and then it goes back to this more mundane mood."

Mario, another participant, told me he spent a long time deciding how to create this playlist.

"I didn't know what criteria to use at first. But finally, the criteria is the ten songs that I listened to a lot and that I believe in the future I will remember and link them to the pandemic. Another criterion is that these are songs that have freed me mentally. Every day I walk my dog and between those walks these songs have come to me like *ahhhh, an epiphany*."

Later in the interview, he would realised and say that another factor in common that links all the songs and the playlist is that he was going through a heartbreak while ending a relationship and that the past months had been tough for him. I noticed that when an- other important factor happened in our lives (participants and me), like heartbreak or grief, this would also filter into our playlists, making our playlists a Russian doll of motives. The heartbreak/grief playlist within the lockdown playlist shows how complex our experiences were during this time and how we used music to ride those moments.

This self-reflection was equally valuable for the participants, as they expressed how meaningful it was to create their playlists and revisit the songs. Hagen highlights the various factors that come into play when making a playlist, such as mood, emotions, making sense of things, and personal experiences (Hagen, 2015). These considerations were evident in the playlist creation process of the participants, including myself, as we sought to create meaningful collections of songs.

Hagen draws from Baudrillard's concept of "collection", distinguishing the act of collecting from accumulating. Baudrillard argues that objects can be seen in two ways: as items that are utilised or as items that are possessed. In the first instance, objects are used to exert control over the real world in a practical way. However, when objects are possessed, they are converted into a subjective and social status independent of their utilitarian function. In this case, the objects are no longer used but

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collected for the sake of being collected (Baudrillard, 1968).

Furthermore, the collection exists with an internal logic that makes sense first to the one curating the collection and then to others. Hagen notes that while Baudrillard (1968) is talking about physical things, she is considering "the collection of something that has now apparently surrendered its physical materiality: music" (Hagen, 2015, p. 629) and draws from McCourt stating that digital music archiving asks from the collectors a new set of values (McCourt, 2006).

I consider playlists the shelf where you put material or non-material objects. However, they can take many forms, such as a piece of paper, a story that we tell to ourselves and someone else, or an online list on YouTube or Spotify, and that is what we add to the shelf if we decide to make it of tin, wood or plastic. If we want it to be large or small, paint it in bright colours or pitch black; every aspect is as important as the objects in it. Playlists by themselves are a representation of a collection of songs that ultimately come from different albums, genres, and rhythms and are, in a way, compelled to leave away the first home where they belong (album) to be part of another creation, a story under a specific subject. DeNora also talks about music as a container for a temporal structure or past experiences and considers the idea that a past event or experience could end up being meaningful because of the music reference embedded in it, considering that music structure could provide a grid for the emotional patterns that occurred in such experience (DeNora, 1999).

Some of my participants chose some art to accompany their playlists; Mario used Western Motel (1957) by the artist Edward Hopper. When we talked about his choice, he explained:

"I feel that his paintings represent this (lockdown) loneliness and the people social distancing from each other. Every aspect of his paintings could be referred to as the pandemic, right now it's very easy to feel what he's describing. You go to a restaurant, and you sit here and the

other person is two meters away. We are living within Hopper paintings right now. Standing at the window alone... You can feel that kind of presence in the images of the pandemic."

Each of us had unique criteria for the song curation, order and naming of the playlist. Moreover, these choices were influenced by our emotions, memories, experiences and biographical stories. The playlists became a tool for making sense of the lockdown experience, allowing us to express our emotions and share our stories with ourselves and others. Once we had carefully curated our playlists and determined which songs would be part of this selection, they became archives and containers of our lockdown experiences.

The process of curating these playlists engaged us in a reflective journey, exploring the significance of the songs and their arrangement. This reflective aspect of playlist creation highlights the narrative elements that emerged from our collective experiences. Reflective storytelling played a significant role in our playlist creation. It underscores how curating a playlist enables individuals to reflect upon their experiences, emotions, and memories. The act of creating a playlist becomes a means of self-expression and a way to convey one's unique perspective on the events and emotions associated with this challenging period.

By recognising the playlist as a powerful tool for personal storytelling, we can explore its implications beyond the sociocultural meanings of music and recognise its unique potential for individual narrative expression and self-reflection. By doing so, we open up new avenues to understand and appreciate the playlist as a tool for personal storytelling in its own right.

While DeNora's work researches the sociocultural meanings of music, her framework may not explicitly address the playlist as a narrative device. However, my research highlights the playlist as a potent narrative tool that helps us comprehend and make sense of the lockdown experience.

By emphasising its role in preserving memories, thoughts, and emotions, my study extends DeNora's concepts by presenting playlists as collective tools for understanding shared experiences, like the covid lockdown. Although the analysis primarily focused on recurring themes across the 25 participants' playlists, this approach was intentional. It allowed me to identify commonalities and intersections in how playlists served as narrative devices across diverse individual experiences of the lockdown.

After creating the playlist for this research, I gained a clearer understanding of how the events of the lockdown unfolded in my life, and this happened to other participants, too. Something similar happened to Estela, one of the participants, who told me that she thought making the playlists would be extremely complicated. She was in Birmingham at the beginning of the pandemic. However, they had to fly home when the borders opened, and due to many circumstances, she started living with her girlfriend; they had only been in a long-distance relationship, which was a big step for them.

"Making the list was so much easier than I thought. I was worried because I thought that I had to put at least a whole day into thinking about it, I didn't thought about how to ensemble it until I sat down to do it and then I started thinking about moments during the pandemic and it was so easy to decide, ok this goes here because of that moment, and this one too. It was very easy to choose my songs within the pandemic reality."

These reflections align with Hagen's concept of curatorial practices, which emphasises how users engage in the selection and arrangement of songs to create a cohesive and meaningful listening experience (Hagen, 2015).

Creating our lockdown playlists was a form of curatorial practice, where we carefully selected songs that held personal significance, reflecting our unique experiences during the lockdown. Curation was a concept

that came up more than once during conversations with the participants. Hagen also mentions the importance of curatorship as a way of having control over the content, which implies control over an individual's self-expression and identity. "Playlist collecting involves imposing one's will (and oneself) upon an intangible realm of endless abundance." (Hagen, 2017, p.643). Mauro, one of the participants, talked explicitly about the narrative aspect of the playlist:

"I think that the charm of the playlist is that it forces you to listen to the songs, like the curatorship (I like to use that word for the playlists) creates a flow, it's like going to the museum. I made this selection for a reason, it's not that I randomly selected these songs and put them here. One is always thinking about the other, the one who listens. The song can mean or not anything to them, but I am interested in them listening to the song."

Though in different ways or approaches, every participant curated their playlist for the interview according to what was relevant to them to communicate with it to me. The importance of considering others as a primary element in creating a playlist is closely related to the above-mentioned finding. Even if the playlist was not shared with anyone else but me, it still holds significance. Later in this chapter, I will discuss the importance of having someone to share and witness our journey. However, I want to highlight the significance of creating playlists and choosing songs that reflect our experiences. Through this process, both participants and I were able to shape our musical narratives and use music as a tool for self- expression and reflection. The act of sharing and discussing their playlists shows the reflective storytelling process, allowing us (participants and me) to gain some insights into our lockdown experiences.

DeNora notes that individuals "turn to music as a device for ongoing identity work and for spinning a biographical thread of self-remembrance" (DeNora, 1999, p.31) and that music serves as a scaffolding for the construct of self-identity (DeNora, 1999). The

concept of scaffolding is relevant for this research when building upon it and considering not music in general but playlists in particular. Just like a scaffold can provide a temporary structure to support some construction work, playlists and the creation process. The playlist acted as a scaffold, providing a framework for participants to process and arrange their experiences and emotions.

Playlists, as a curated collection of songs, can serve both as a scaffolding for self-constitution and a container for personal significance and a scaffolding for self-constitution. A playlist as a shelf or container reflects on the acts of selecting and arranging songs that resonate within the subject of theme of choice, in this case, our experience during the pandemic. The shelf preserves the songs in order and gives them a place and tangible representation of the narrative we chose to create.

On the other hand, DeNora's concept of scaffolding applied to creating playlists suggests that playlists can also provide a framework for self-reflection. This metaphor implies that playlists can offer a structure or guidance to understand challenging moments during times of crisis, such as the lockdown.

While DeNora's work explores music as a scaffold for self-identity, my research extends this concept by differentiating between scaffolding for managing experiences and scaffolding for identity. Throughout the 25 playlists and dialogues with my participants and my own playlist and reflection of the lockdown though it, I consider we used the playlist as a temporary structure to get us through this specific challenging time, the way a scaffolding is built to repair a specific situation in a building. DeNora emphasises music's role in shaping identity by providing a framework for biographical self-remembering (DeNora, 1999). This perspective is indeed foundational, but my research also explores the way playlists function as both a scaffold for processing difficult experiences and a tool for self-expression.

The distinction between the different factions of the scaffolding lies in

how playlists serve as temporary structures supporting emotional processing versus the role in music as a tool for an ongoing identity work. While DeNora's framework addresses music as a scaffold for identity by aiding self-remembering and personal narrative construction, my analysis shows that music though playlists can also function as a structure that help us manage and contain specific moments and challenging experiences.

Overall, I consider that playlists as curated collections can serve as metaphorical shelves and scaffolds functioning as a multi-layered entity that can offer both organisation, containment and support to make sense of an experience and for self-expression.

5.2.2 KF2: Connection, Empathy, and Transformative Power of Sharing Playlists

This key finding directly addresses *Research Question 2*: *What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow?* The finding illustrates that the act of the participants sharing their playlists (and their process behind the creation) with me facilitated an exchange of experiences and open up a dialogue. This dialogue elicited deep emotional discussions about the experiences we were going through, fostering empathy and connection. Through these dialogues, I was able to identify how music played a vital role in helping participants, including myself, navigate the lockdown, offering a means to connect with our emotions, our memories, and with others—both real and imagined.

The act of sharing and discussing playlists aligns with José van Dijck's exploration of social interaction and identity. van Dijck (2006) emphasises how sharing musical memories and engaging in conversations about popular music can foster social interaction and contribute to the formation of individual and collective identities. By sharing their playlist with me (and when I shared my playlist with my friend), we (the

participants and I) created a channel for empathy and communication, allowing us to connect with others who were also navigating the challenges of the lockdown. This sense of connection and shared experience enhanced our sense of belonging and provided reassurance that we were not alone in our hardships.

The process of creating the playlists that represented their experience of the lockdown for our interview proved to be a compelling experience and reflective exercise, for both the participants of this study and myself. As we curated our playlists, we had to reflect on our personal experiences, selecting songs that resonated with our emotions and the narratives we wished to share. It is significant, considering I conducted the interviews via Zoom in Glasgow. At the same time, my participants were situated in Mexico City—a city still grappling with the difficulties of the ongoing pandemic. These interviews were among the few connections with my language and culture during moments of great stress, sadness and uncertainty.

Sharing their songs and experiences with me created a channel for empathy and connection between us, aligning with van Dijck's exploration of collective listening: "Shared listening, exchanging (recorded) songs, and talking about music create a sense of belonging, and connect a person's sense of self to a larger community and generation" (van Dijck, 2006, p.357). This exchange allowed us to forge meaningful bonds with each other, while we were experiencing the challenges of the lockdown. The shared experiences and connections formed through sharing their playlist and the exchange of experiences we had ignited by the playlists, further deepened our sense of belonging and provided reassurance that we were not alone in our hardships. Maybe we were unaware of it while doing the interviews, but our memories were connected with the collective expe- rience of the pandemic. In this context, van Dijck's observation resonates with my perspective:

"It is the desire to couple personal memories with collective experience

and the need for a platform for the exchange of musical memories that constitutes the repeated success and public impact."
(van Djick, 2006, p. 371)

Expanding on the idea of collective and community, Campos Valverde's study introduces the notion of "imagined listening" (Campos Valverde, 2020) as a new analytical tool to explain the social relationships that arise from people's interaction with online music and other musical media. In the realm of music sharing on social media, the article highlights the significance of imagined audiences as imagined communities of listeners. The concept of imagined listening deepens the idea of my participants curating their playlists for the interview but potentially considering an imagine audience that would listen and connect with their choice of songs, furthermore, meaning they would relate to their experience of the lockdown giving them a sense of company, while they were crafting their playlists.

Imagined listening involves thinking of and remembering a piece of music, imagining an audience for its redistribution, and considering how that audience will listen to and benefit from it.

The act of crafting a playlist also implied an imaginary recipient, someone for whom we curated these songs and playlists, taking our time, thoughts and reflections. This introduction explores the transformative possibilities sharing playlists has, fostering connection and empathy and bearing witness to diverse experiences during lockdown.

Within the context of my findings, expanding on the concept of imagined listening by Malverde (2020) and the concept of community building through sharing music by van Djick (2006), adds a new dimension to the possibilities and uses of sharing playlists within a challenging time like the lockdown. And how this process would be a useful exercise to create the sense of connections and community with others even in moments of isolation. The mental processes involved in imagined listening reflect how users post music media, evoke it mentally and imagine how others

will or could listen. It encompasses the present, past, and future, where individuals imagine themselves or others engaging with music.

Moreover, imagined listening is intertwined with the existence of "unlistened" playlists in streaming platforms (Campos Valverde, 2020), representing a form of musicking that anticipates engagement from oneself and others, as well as the evocation of future musical memories in live shows. This dynamic highlight the complex relationship between online music practices and the generation of collective listening experiences.

While the ubiquity of music media might suggest a lack of social connection in online spaces, participants' statements, as described in the article, reveal an acknowledgement of speaking into the void and an ambivalence about the impact of their musical practices.

What I discovered through KF2 is that the process of creating playlists, even those specifically curated for our interview, inherently involved a sense of connection, as illustrated by Campos Malverde's concept of 'imagined listening' (Malverde, 2020). This sense of connection stems from the notion that we curated these playlists for someone—perhaps an unknown listener, yet one we imagine to be present. Simultaneously, the act of sharing these playlists during the interviews and articulating the experiences behind them aligns with van Dijck's idea of fostering a collective sense of community through the exchange of music.

5.2.3 KF3: Bearing witness to the Lockdown Experience

In this section, I explore how playlists facilitated meaningful dialogue and emotional processing between the participants and myself, addressing Research Question 3: *How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?* By using playlists as narrative tools, we were able to engage in discussions about complex themes such as grief, loneliness, and fear that were facilitated

by the presence of the songs and playlists created for the interview as vehicle for the participants to tell their lockdown stories.

The act of sharing and listening to the stories behind the playlist and bearing witness to participants' narratives provided validation and support. Holding space for each other when sharing moments of the lockdown contributed to acknowledging diverse experiences and voices that emerged during the pandemic.

Crafting a playlist goes beyond personal expression; listening and sharing songs signifies the desire to couple our memories with collective experiences (van Dijck, 2006). When the participants shared their songs and playlists with me, we created a platform for ex- changing musical memories, fostering connections and leaving a lasting impact on both the creators (participants) and recipients (me and whoever else they decide to share their playlist with). However, the significance of this connection was not only limited to the shared experience of music but also extended to the narratives that emerged during our interactions. In this context, the concept of Narrative medicine provides a perspective for understanding this exchange. Narrative medicine (Engel, Zarconi, Pethtel, & Missima, 2008) refers to a medicine fortified with knowing what to do with the stories of illness. In exploring the significance of narratives in shaping our understanding of experiences, the concept of narrative medicine aligns with the process of creating playlists during the lockdown. Narrative medicine helps provide a framework to explore the emotional, cultural and interpersonal dimensions the process of creating and sharing a playlist can grasp and helps to bring light to the importance of narratives in shaping our understanding of the experience.

Playlists served as a form of storytelling, where participants curated a collection of songs that held personal significance and reflected their experiences, emotions, and memories. Participants shared songs, personal stories, experiences, and emotions related to the lockdown and pandemic. When participants shared their playlists with me, it created a platform for exchanging musical memories and narratives. Narrative medicine emphasises the importance of shared narratives, as they

contribute to a sense of belonging and foster connections among individuals; this was a two-way road, considering that they also held space for my experience and were curious to know how I experienced the pandemic in Glasgow. Participants actively engaged in a collective storytelling process through sharing and discussing experiences and emotions, creating a shared narrative of their experiences during the lockdown.

In her research about narrative medicine and the significance of listening to their patients (and the body's patients) Charon (2009) notes that stories of illness reveal that our bodies are more than mere machines or vessels. They actively participate in our lives, carrying our joys, sorrows, and memories while shaping our future, constraining and enriching our existence (Charon, 2009). I consider there is a parallel between the experience of illness and the lockdown, understanding that both situations affect individuals physically and emotionally. Illness, similar to the restrictions and isolation imposed during the pandemic lockdown, is an experience that is lived through the body.

In this context, sharing and actively listening to our personal narratives created a space where mutual visibility and understanding thrived. Charon states, "As human beings hear one another out, donating serious and generous attention, and listening from the teller's side, they are able to perceive one another, bestowing and accepting recognition as a result." (Charon, 2009, p.120). Sharing playlists and engaging in conversations about songs that reflect feelings of uncertainty, frustration, and the complexities of loss in the context of the pandemic became a meaningful way for us (the participants and I) to navigate grief, especially since many cultural rituals that help us cope with loss and grief were restricted.

Charon's approach to her new patients resonates closely with how I conducted my interviews with participants. She would begin by asking her new patients, "I will be your doctor, and so I must learn a great deal about your body, health, and life. Please tell me what you think I should

know about your situation" (Charon, 2009, p.122). Similarly, I was aware that I did not know the diverse intersectionalities that would emerge from my participants; I aimed to create a space where they felt safe and with complete freedom to share whatever they considered relevant for me to know about their playlists and stories.

I draw a parallel between Charon's approach and my own for the interviews based on the structure of our conversations and the emphasis on participants guiding the narrative rather than on any therapeutic intention. While Charon would ask her patients to share what they thought she should know about their situation, I asked participants to tell me about their playlists in a way that allowed them to shape the discussion. The aim was similar, to let the participant/interviewee feel empowered to tell their story and explore their emotions, memories, and experiences during a challenging time (the pandemic in my case, health issues challenges in Charon's case), as much as possible.

During the interviews, typically, after the hellos and some exchange about how they were doing that day and asking them if they have any questions about the interview or research and if they were ready for the interview, I would initiate the conversation by asking "What would you like to tell me about your playlist?". Adopting a receptive stance while they were willing to share this space with me, we created space for the participants to shape the narrative and guide me through their experiences and songs.

Charon calls these interviews an episode of storytelling and the act of interviewing as going together through a narrative event (Charon, 2009), where the participant is the guide and bearer of the knowledge of the story and experience. The teller becomes both the source and the destination of the account, attached to their understanding and meaning making of the experience through the playlist. Thus, sharing the song within the playlist became a means of musical connection and a medium through which narratives of self and lived experiences were shared and witnessed.

As Charon eloquently puts it, "The conversation goes on between the limitless potential of the self of this human being and its incarnation into this particular human body while some of the hovering beings listen" (Charon, 2009, p.123).

This exchange of personal narratives was something that happened organically within the interviews as participants shared their stories with me. During some moments of the interview, I could see them struggle with talking about complex subjects such as loss for the first time with someone they barely know (even if they were willing to tell their story), as a way to remove that awkwardness that I already knew too well with my own experience of loss, I would share this part of my lockdown experience with them. In doing this, my intention was to eliminate any obstacles or unease that might have occurred, allowing a more authentic space for them to feel safe.

I was touched and surprised by their response and the participants' ability to extend empathy and hold space towards me despite being the one conducting the conversations. Their heartfelt inquiries went beyond what others who had not experienced the same circumstances could even think to ask. They knew the unique challenges I faced during those difficult times. One of them, Samuel, who also lost his grandfather to COVID-19, asked me shyly if I had the opportunity to bid farewell to my parents amidst the chaos of the *covitarios* –the designated COVID-19 hospitals in Mexico. All of them, who also lost someone, were aware of the dire situation in the hospitals, especially in the southern states like mine, where the healthcare system struggled to cope with the overwhelming number of patients and the severe shortage of essential equipment. Their empathy and care made me feel seen and understood in a way no one else in Glasgow could genuinely comprehend. They were also navigating the complexities of grief and mourning amid a pandemic, isolated within the confines of their homes.

It was not only that I lost my parents but also the hardship of doing it in

an overwhelmed healthcare system, and the participants were aware of all that. No one around me in Glasgow knew how frustrating and tiring it was to try to keep them alive when there was a shortage of medicine or oxygen in the hospitals and to what extent the struggle and grief started way before my parents' death. They knew that because they also experienced hardship with their loved ones during the pandemic.

I realised that by sharing my story, just as Charon stated, the participants were in the presence of my body and the story I was telling them and myself about what had happened. My story was a work in progress, and they became integral to it, witnessing the unfolding story of my grief. In being present, they were becoming part of it. Through this shared space of containment and empathy, I began to acknowledge that the loss of my parents was a profound tragedy. I had, perhaps unconsciously, attempted to down- play my pain, as my immediate environment appeared untouched by the weight of my mourning. I started to comprehend the immense role that the context played in my daily existence. It became apparent that being surrounded by individuals who understood the collective trauma my home country endured, the widespread losses, and the struggles of dealing with COVID-19 or having a loved one afflicted by it would have created a differ- ent dynamic. Those who lived there or had close connections to the place could grasp the depth of the crisis. They were unaware of it, but the participants in my study unintentionally validated my feelings when I needed it the most. For that demonstration of kindness, I will forever be thankful.

The participants were aware of the obstacles and frustrations of trying to keep my par- ents alive amidst the scarcity of vital resources. Securing the right medicine and oxygen tanks to sustain their breathing was a daily challenge, with prices skyrocketing due to the high demand and severe shortages. They intimately understood the long and arduous journey that began well before my parents' passing. We were battling against a strained healthcare system and living in a pre-vaccine landscape where everything was on a learning curve. It was an uphill struggle filled with grief and anguish that extended far beyond the

moment of their departure.

Furthermore, the participants could relate to this struggle on a personal level, as they had experienced similar hardships and losses during the pandemic. For instance, Samuel, one of the participants in this study, endured the loss of his mother and grandfather during the pandemic. The six-month gap between each of his losses mirrored the timeline of my own parent's passing. Samuel's mother succumbed to cancer, while his grandfather passed due to COVID-19. When we talked about losing them, he told me he was very angry with this grandad -his father figure- because he was stubborn and reckless and not as careful as Samuel had wished him to be. I felt the same about my parents at that moment, thinking once and again at what moment they had gotten the virus and all the 'if only' possibilities I ran through my head, considering they could still be alive. Samuel sharing this thought with me made me realise it was normal that I was angry at them, and it helped me stop feeling guilty about those feelings.

Another participant, Andrea, recounted the story of losing her best friend, who stayed in a coma for over a month at the onset of the pandemic. She shared with me how difficult it was to be able to visit him due to COVID-19 rules in the hospital, knowing it was the last moment she had with him and how she was the only friend able to say goodbye to him because of these same rules.

In their narratives, both Samuel and Andrea vividly described the collateral damage caused by the COVID-19 crisis – the collapse of the healthcare system in Mexico, making it exponentially more challenging to provide care to patients with chronic illnesses or emergencies.

Conversations with Samuel, Andrea, and Ari about our shared experiences and journey brought a sense of understanding. We could explore the depths of our grief with some- one who understood these experiences. The knowledge that they had gone through similar journeys and understood the inherent challenges of our losses provided a sense of

validation and acknowledgement. Talking about our similar experiences and how it felt to go through them with someone who knew the difficulty of these experiences made them, I believe, feel a similar sense of being seen to what I felt. We created a safe space grounded in empathy and understanding by holding space for one another, engaging in these challenging conversations, and bearing witness to each other's experiences.

Bearing witness to participants' narratives and experiences during the lockdown, while they also held space for some parts of my story at moments, transcended mere listen- ing, creating a space for validation and support. This stage was also a culmination of a process that started with choosing our songs for the playlist, deciding what to share and the story we wanted to tell about our lockdown. Moreover, I could consider it started even earlier while we were listening to some songs intuitively to help us go through the pandemic, even when we did not know the songs would be contained later in a story.

However, in this final step, listening and sharing our experiences, and through active engagement in this process, both the participants and I were able to experience significant shifts in understanding of the lockdown. We understood we were not alone in our emotions as we shared moments and experiences that showed a common connection to the pandemic. All of this happened when talking about moments and experiences we shared while, at the same time, discovering situations foreign to us. For instance, I gained a deeper idea of the frustrations and challenges faced by someone living with their entire family (of at least five members) in Mexico City during the pandemic. Similarly, I learned about the added complexities and extra-isolation endured by those living through the lockdown with chronic illness due to the prevailing ableism in the health system in Mexico. At the same time, they learned about my experience as a Mexican going through the lockdown in a foreign country.

By actively listening to the stories shared by participants and they doing

the same for me, we created a platform for our experiences to be seen and acknowledged. This act of genuine presence and attentiveness allowed us to feel seen. This action is one of the big surprises of the research, considering the significance of this validation is profound as it reaffirmed our experiences during lockdown as something real and important, giving us a sense of agency.

The act of bearing witness was not a one-sided process. In vulnerable moments, when the participants shared their stories with me and I shared some of my experiences, a reciprocal dynamic emerged. Without knowing it, they also created a space for me to be able to feel vulnerable and feel seen in return. This unexpected collaboration and mutual support added an extra layer of depth to my research.

Through their concerns about my experiences, the participants displayed another level of understanding beyond what anyone who had not experienced the pandemic in similar circumstances could even begin to understand. Their genuine care and curiosity about my experience of the pandemic gave me a unique gift to be witnessed and understood in a genuine way. Without any need to translate my experience at any level, not only language-wise, which already bares an obstacle because it immediately de-centred my experience when translating my pain and such complex experience to a second language, but also my emotions. I was able to laugh and keep silent and even emote some gestures that rounded up my experience in a way I was not able to do with others, not even my family, who were going through their grief journey and sometimes preferred not to talk about the situation and their emotions towards loss. In sharing their stories and engaging in conversations about loss, grief, and the challenges of the lockdown, they also held space for my experiences.

This mutual exchange of personal narratives unfolded naturally within the interviews. For this to happen, I have realised while writing this chapter that a noticeable amount of bravery to dare to be seen in our pain from both parties took part. This offering of vulnerability and

empathy cancelled most obstacles or unease that may have appeared initially, creating a safe space for us to share our stories.

During the interviews, the participants were always the guides and bearers of knowledge, shaping my understanding of their experiences, playlists and stories while helping me understand the pandemic experience in Mexico much more profoundly. As Rita Charon describes in her work, the conversation became a narrative event where the participants and I actively co-created knowledge and understanding of a collective experience (Charon, 2009).

The research would not have been possible without the participants, which is stating the obvious. Nevertheless, their willingness to share their stories even when they had complex emotions within them and hold space to share some of mine gave another layer to the study. This collaboration encompassed an exchange of stories that allowed us to learn from one another, enriching our understanding of our lockdown experience. This exchange demonstrated the potential of collective storytelling through the playlists and how they hold the possibilities of transformation that come forward when, as individuals, we used music through the playlists to sit and share our stories.

Within the concept of bearing witness, I find one concept relevant for this discussion: the term "Affective witnessing", coined by Richardson and Schankweiler (2019, 2020). They discuss that this concept refers to understanding the theory and practice of witnessing, focusing on the presence, emotion and intensity of the encounter and experience (Richardson & Schankweiler, 2020). Affective witnessing provides a theoretical framework that allows us to analyse witnessing in a way that considers aspects that might often be ignored, including the social, physical and relational dimensions of witnessing (Richardson & Schankweiler, 2020). On the aspect of witnessing as a practice, this concept acknowledges that witnessing is not merely a passive observation but rather something that is felt and involves the entire body, and affective witnessing also creates relationalities with all kinds

of bodies (Richardson & Schankweiler, 2020)

Adding to Richardson and Schankweiler's concept, Zembylas (2021) introduces the notion of 'vulnerability' as an affective relation to reconsider the framework to understand vulnerability in pedagogical theory and practice (Zembylas, 2021). They consider that the notion of vulnerability as an affective state is relevant because it highlights that connecting our vulnerability to other's vulnerability can be transformative. Recognising and witnessing each other's vulnerability can serve as "a navigating affective tool to detect micro-options that enhance possibilities for action." (Zembylas, 2021, p.11).

The songs and playlists served as a bridge during the interviews, making it easier to discuss difficult and emotional subjects. They acted as emotional buffers, lightening the weight of conversations about grief, loneliness, and other challenging experiences we were going through at the moment. The songs offered a translation and a shared medium through which to explore these emotions. The playlists in whole were the guidance throughout the conversation. Without the music, these conversations would have been harder to initiate or sustain. The playlists enabled both participants and me to express what may have otherwise remained unspoken. In this way, the songs facilitated the process of *affective witnessing*, creating a space where vulnerability could be shared more comfortably. Music allowed us to indirectly approach sensitive topics, softening the intensity of our discussions, which also allowed me to be more open to exchange stories and emotions.

Through this study, I have learned first-hand the transformative effects of feeling seen and understood by someone who shares similar experiences. It was a great honour and responsibility for someone to be willing to share their stories with me. Sharing their playlists and songs with me has been a transformative experience and will have an everlasting effect on me. Some of their songs have become part of my everyday life. The effectiveness of some songs that help participants

cope with challenging times got transferred to me. And I will be forever grateful for this unexpected gift. For example, one song that particularly stands out to me is the song I am the Resurrection by the Stone Roses that Isa chose for her playlist, "I am the Resurrection" by the Stone Roses (Mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.4.7 Perseverance). That song got transplanted into my *everyday playlist*. As I listened to it during my walks, I understood what Isa meant about the anger mixed with pride that comes with enduring difficult times, feeling like metaphorically dying and resurrecting while trying to carry on. In my time in Glasgow during the lockdown and later on, I often felt I was never truly understood. I kept having to explain my struggles through the rest of my PhD journey to different instances and people, so in a way, the exchange with the participants was a lifeline for me. It gave me agency and helped me remember that my pain was real in a world that kept trying to move on from the pandemic and all the havoc it caused.

I dare to suggest that perhaps the participants experienced this on some levels -having a space to talk openly about the songs they listened to, the people they lost, the songs that reminded them of other people or places, or simply talking about the complexity of their pandemic experience. This process was healing and empowering, and it opened up new roads for resilience and other ways of processing emotions that may otherwise re- main hidden or unexpressed. We have, at least, after talking with each other, the certainty and comfort of knowing they were not alone while struggling with this experience.

Drawing from these two concepts: Affective Witnessing and vulnerability by Richardson and Schankweiler (2019, 2020) and Zembylas (2021), I consider the idea of 'Shared Experiential Witnessing.' This notion highlights the transformation that occurs when bearing witness to shared experiences, emphasising the recognition of reciprocal witnessing. This concept emphasises the act of witnessing and sharing lived experiences. It focuses on individuals or groups sharing their experiences and reflections in the context of a specific event or period, such as the COVID-19 lockdown, underscoring the importance of being present and

attentive to the other's experience, centring mutual understanding and transformation. This concept emphasises that bearing witness is not a one- way process but a reciprocal and transformative exchange. It refers to the mutual trans- formation that occurs while witnessing others' stories and experiences when there is a similar context or narrative between them. It reflects on how the act of the participants sharing their playlists and stories of their lockdown ignited an exchange of stories that were not passive but a reciprocal and transformative process.

It also sheds light on the part of the one being witnessed, as my experience of feeling seen and heard by them was a significant act for me during a heavy period of confusion and loss; their presence and attention were not only meaningful but a reason for me to start getting better in my process of grief, affecting my mental health positively, not only during the interviews but months and years after.

The interviews where the playlists were shared were a meaningful action that impacted our (participants and I) of our pandemic experience. Putting our experiences into perspective when comparing them with someone else gave us a new perspective on the pandemic. This shift allowed us to create a sense of agency through telling our stories and getting validation, creating a supportive environment for everyone involved.

In this **KF3**, the use of playlists proved to be instrumental into eliciting a deep and rich conversation of the participants' experience of the lockdown. The songs acted as a bridge, allowing us to discuss challenging and personal subjects like grief and loneliness more easily. The way the songs and the playlists as a whole represented key moments and a guide of their lockdown experience though music, enabled us to create a space where vulnerability could be shared and understood through songs. This approach also resonates with the concept of "Affective Witnessing" by Richardson and Schankweiler (2019, 2020) and Zembylas' (2021) concept of vulnerability. I connect these concepts by understanding how

the act of the participants sharing playlists with me fostered a meaningful dialogue and experience exchange. The playlist provided a supportive framework for mutual understanding and validation.

Through the concept I introduce, **Shared Experiential Witnessing**, I propose that both participants and I, through the dialogue facilitated by the songs, were able to bridge personal narratives with collective experiences, creating a dialogue that allowed us to better understand ourselves and each other.

By connecting Richardson and Schankweiler's (2019, 2020) concept of affective witnessing, Zembylas' (2021) exploration of vulnerability as an affective relation, and Charon's (2006) methodology of narrative medicine—where the storyteller's agency is prioritised—I propose that the dialogues elicited and facilitated by sharing playlists demonstrate how personal and shared narratives, elicited through music, can contribute to our understanding of collective experiences during challenging times.

5.2.4 KF4: Playlists as Maps of Emotional Spaces: Intersecting Journeys Through our Lockdown Playlists

In alignment with Research Question 3—*How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?*—this KF explores how the playlists acted as emotional maps, helping participants and me navigate the emotional landscape of the pandemic. The playlists curated for this research provided a framework for processing emotions and making sense of our lockdown experience. The dialogues that emerged from sharing these playlists further highlighted the commonalty of the emotional landmarks we visited repeatedly, revealing collective resonances.

During the process of analysing the interviews and the playlist to interpret the data gathered, I identified patterns in our playlists that

provided insight into the emotions and experiences of the participants and myself during the lockdown. I consider these patterns a visual representation or a map that can illustrate the landmarks of our lockdown experiences. The songs within the playlists revealed themes and significant moments that intersected with our lockdown experiences. The playlists helped us express our individual emotional experiences while also depicting our collective experience, tracing our journeys through the emotional map of the lockdown.

These patterns resembled nodes—distinct emotional landmarks—that many of us seemed to inhabit during the collective experience of the pandemic. When I conducted the interviews during the initial stages of the pandemic, we found ourselves in a specific timeframe before the vaccine was available, and there was a significant amount of uncertainty about the present and the future. While deeply engaged with a significant external event and fluctuating emotions, our sense of self was intertwined with the world and context around us.

I noticed these points overlap across numerous playlists. These were not fleeting emotions or circumstances; they held significant sway over the participants and myself. In a way, we dwelled within these emotions through the music, revisiting them repeatedly, much like we would frequent or dwell in a physical location which we felt some comfort coming back to. Encountering similar emotions across various playlists led to "emotional visits" to these points of convergence or shared spaces.

As a result of the forced isolation and immobility of the pandemic, there emerged a contrast between the emotional geographies we were inhabiting and the ones we were physically occupying during the pandemic. Our emotions and thoughts were going from one place to another while we had to remain put into our homes isolated from the world. As shared by the participants, there was an array of emotions and thoughts going through our minds, going from hope to fear and coming back to hope again. To starting to question the reality and work environment we were inhabiting from reflecting on our romantic

relationships and life's priorities, all of this while having to stay static in one place due to isolation. These contrasts and intersections can be seen in most of the playlists and are the 10 moments/themes I discuss in Chapter 4, findings, in which I will go deep further on considering them the nodes of our emotional maps of the lockdown. These nodes, or intersections, where the specific way we used songs to cope with the lockdown. The emotions represented in these landmark songs had a meaningful impact on the participants and me. In a sense, we resided with these emotions through the songs and returned many times to them. Patterns of experiencing similar emotions across different playlists resulted in shared "emotional spaces" that the participants and I visited frequently during our lockdown.

Reflecting on these emotional nodes and how they represent our emotional maps and journeys, it became clear that music was not just a passive reflection of our emotions but an active participant in them. As DeNora states,

"Music's effects come from the ways in which individuals orient to it, how they interpret it and how they place it within their personal musical maps, within the semiotic web of music and its extra-musical associations" (DeNora, 2000, p.61).

This concept aligns closely with the idea of emotional maps in my study, as participants and I used music to navigate, process, and wander within the emotional landscapes of the lockdown. Music played a dynamic role, actively shaping our experiences and emotions, and when the participants went through the process of curating the playlist for the interview, they in someways traced a map of the emotional places they wandered and the emotions they embodied through the songs while going through the pandemic. These playlists/maps of their lockdown when overlapped show intersections of a broader emotional landscape of the pandemic experience.

Each playlist represented an individual's journey, while the intersections

show a communal terrain many of us navigated during the pandemic. Although these moments or emotions might have been expressed through different song choices and music styles, they were fundamentally interconnected in the collective experiences.

To further elaborate on the metaphor of a map, I will now consider the categories I identified in Chapter Four, Findings. These categories can be seen as the emotional locations or nodes on this collective map of the pandemic. This map is created from the patterns that emerged from participants' playlists. The nodes/categories include Togetherness, Internal Changes, Loss, Anger, Feel-Good Moments, Perseverance, Interconnection, Lockdown Experience, and Post-Pandemic Future. These categories act as collective nodes and serve as meaningful moments that many participants and I experienced, although in unique ways, as we navigated the pandemic. Each category represents an emotional landscape, with songs with different purposes, like emotional regulation, self-reflection or processing losses. We collectively inhabited these emotions, not implying that each of us experienced the same emotion, but rather a collective resonance around certain moments and emotions linked to the pandemic experience.

I created this collective map of our pandemic experiences below to represent these emotional nodes and intersections visually.

5.1 Map of our Lockdown Experience
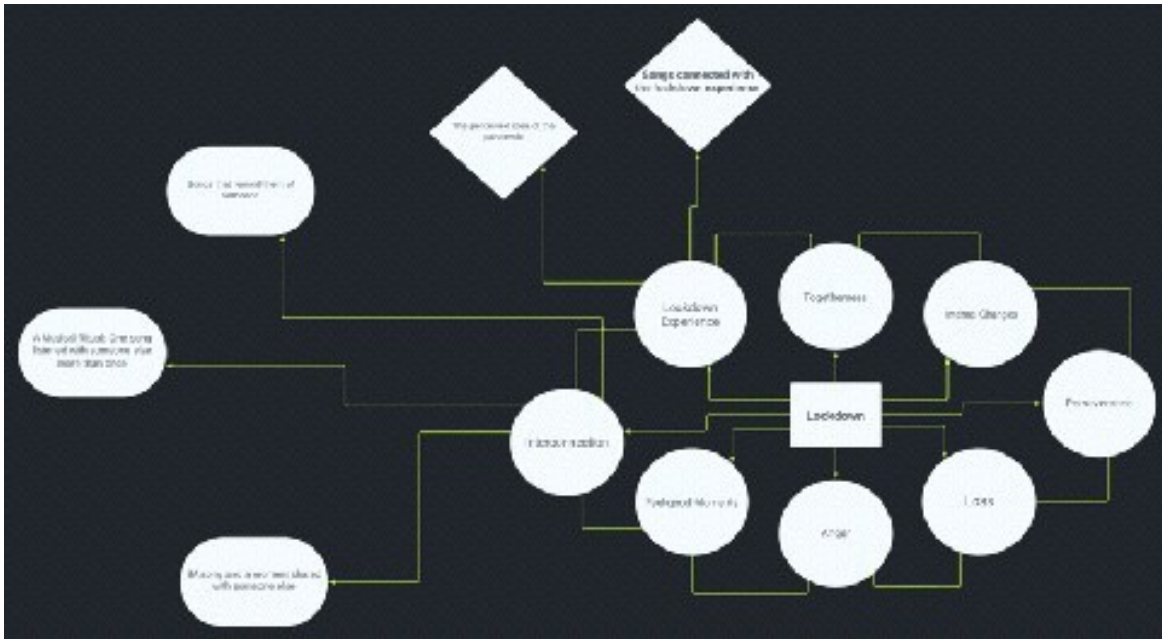
In underscoring the connections of emotions as a way to map an experience of a journey, I draw on Maddrell's (2016) work on mapping grief, which offers a unique reflection of emotional landscapes. Her approach to using grief as a map, tracing the emotional journey through internal and external spaces, becomes relevant in understanding how individuals navigate and make sense of their experiences. As I consider the creation of an emotional map of the lockdown through our playlists, Maddrell's insights are a helpful framework. While reflecting on her journey through loss, she realised internal and external (physical) places were linked to her grief. Maddrell discovered that her physical experience was a way of mapping her grief. Initially, she considered this map was due to her unique process through her losses; however, her immersion in a bereavement support network over five years provided her with a discovery that every individual's encounter with loss and the aftermath of bereavement unfolds within distinct geographies.

"Everyone's experience of bereavement and their negotiation of life after bereavement had particular geographies, some more explicit than others. Furthermore, understanding these geographies offered significant insight to often complex experiences, responses and strategies."
(Maddrell A. 2016, pp. 168).

According to Maddrell, grief can be a temporary state for some people that eventually transcends. For others, grief becomes part of who they are, shifting their very being, changing their emotions and affecting how they experience the world; she highlights that this does not mean that the bereaved are incapacitated at any point but that it is important to recognise how loss can become a part of one's identity and the way they relate to others, as well as the connection with familiar places and activities (Maddrell, 2016).

Maddrell's concept of grief as both 'inhabited and inhabiting' resonates with the idea of an emotional map of the lockdown. The emotional journeys, marked by the playlists we curated, reflect the constant change of our identities, forever changed by the experience of the lockdown. The emotional map of the lockdown experience shows how going through this time of crisis was not just a temporal phase. It was also a transformative moment that inhabits still within us and influences our individual and collective realities and the way we relate to each other.

The playlists are, in essence, an emotional topography of the lockdown experience; they offer a visualisation of the participants' different paths through the emotional landscape of their lockdown experience, and they intersect each other in crucial moments. Just as Maddrell discovered that her emotional map could also be part of a collective mapping of other individuals going through grief, I consider each playlist part of a broader collective map of the pandemic sharing emotional places. Like the geography of grief offers insights into this complex human experience, examining the interconnections within the playlists uncovers the shared emotional landscape of the lockdown, revealing its distinct landmarks and intersections. I consider this collective map of the lockdown parallel to the one Maddrell states of grief (2016) can offer guidance or a window of another complex journey, such as the experience of the pandemic.

Maddrell's observation about internal maps is that these are complex and constantly changing assemblages, affected and shaped by emotions, memories, and affective reactions evoked through senses (Maddrell, 2016) aligns with my idea of the emotional map of the lockdown. I consider the internal maps that we created during the lockdown were in constant change and adjustments, shaped by what we were going through at that moment, and that the playlists serving as these emotional maps, when assembled and layer up, also allowed me to see a collective map of the emotions we went through during that time of the lockdown.

What distinguishes the emotional map built through these playlists is the reflection and engagement participants invested in it. They carefully considered which moments and emotions the songs represented before adding them to the playlist. They traced their emotional map of the lockdown, which happened to intersect other common locations with other playlists/maps. There was an intention behind it to trace the emotions and the events that created these personal landmarks.

Furthermore, as Maddrell reflects, bereavement, grief, and mourning can manifest in external material spaces like burial or cremation sites, internal spaces such as disorientation, healing, and psychological response, and virtual spaces like technology or faith (Maddrell, 2016). This framework resonates with the lockdown experience, although within distinct boundaries. Our physical and external places were limited to our homes and other specific locations dictated by the pandemic restrictions. Within these confined physical boundaries, our internal spaces were enriched by uncertainty, self-reflection, anger and joy. The disruption of normality as we knew it, coupled with uncertainty and a changed perspective of reality during lockdown, heightened our internal journeys, making them into a more dynamic space of internal reflection about our emotions and thoughts.

I consider that the songs within these emotional landmarks served as symbolic spaces that participants and I visited during the pandemic. Much like one would return to a physical place on a map, we can do that with our playlists and songs. Moreover, we can show those places to anyone we decide to share our experience with others. Each landmark, filled with songs from different participants and myself, contains memories, reflections and emotions under a subject or team, the same as a physical place like a coffee shop, museum or park could be significant in different ways to different people.

The songs within the playlists act as markers that allow us to organise our lockdown experience. From the collective perspective, these

became landmarks of collective feelings or experiences, such as anger, togetherness or hope for a post-pandemic future. I view these landmarks as coordinates in a collective emotional landscape, much like a guide handle at the entrance of a museum. Unlike traditional maps with defined routes or destinations, the playlists offer a more fluid experience. They function as spaces to wander and reflect, much like exploring a gallery or museum. Rather than a linear progression from point A to point B, these playlists invite a journey through emotions— sometimes revisiting certain feelings or lingering in specific memories. In this way, they represent a more dynamic and open-ended exploration of the emotional terrain of the pandemic, rather than a strict roadmap.

As Maddrell discovered in her grief, this emotional journey was a solitary one, but one many have gone through before. If someone outside of the participants or myself were to look at this map, they might see parallels to their own journey during the pandemic and realise that they were never as alone isolated experience as they may have once believed previously during this challenging time.

Through mapping emotions such as Togetherness, Loss, and Perseverance, I demonstrate that our emotional journeys during lockdown were part of a larger communal terrain. I extend on Maddrell's concept into a new context, incorporating her theoretical framework into the study of musical navigation through emotional landscapes. Through these playlists, music becomes a medium for navigating emotional geographies during times of crisis.

5.3 Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the role that music and playlists played during the COVID-19 lockdown, offering comfort and connection amid isolation. This chapter worked on exploring the playlists as personal narratives, transformative agents and cultural artefacts reflecting a diverse array of emotions and experiences. The research navigated the challenges of the pandemic, focusing on four key findings that shed light

on the web of emotions and experiences woven through playlist creation and sharing.

This chapter shows the significance of playlist creation in these trying times. It demonstrates that playlists can be more than simple collections of songs; they can emerge as emotional topographies, guiding individuals through the intricate emotional geographies of lockdown experiences. The act of curating playlists becomes an introspective journey, a means of self-expression, and a reflection of collective resonance. These shared musical narratives extend beyond personal boundaries, fostering empathy and understanding that bridges the gap between individual and communal experiences.

Within this exploration, I discovered that the journey of playlist creation during the lockdown is not confined to the individual but extends to a collective narrative, offering an exciting lens through which to comprehend the emotional intricacies of an important and pivotal moment for society. Paying attention to the diverse intersections revealed within these playlists and interviews, I am reminded of the potential and capacity of music to connect us and make us company during challenging times.

Chapter 6. Conclusion

6.1 Introduction

In the final chapter of this thesis, I summarise the research and discuss the Key Findings. I will also reflect on the contribution this research has made to knowledge and consider the limitations of this research. Additionally, I will shed light on the possible directions for future research, and finally, I will share my reflections about the research and my journey through it.

This chapter consists of ten sections that explore how the playlists created for the interview to express their playlist pandemic became tools for self-expression, as much as igniters of dialogues and connection and meaning-making the Covid-19 pandemic. In Section 6.2 I provide an overview of the research trajectory, from its beginning to the recalibration prompted by the impact of COVID-19. Section 6.3 addresses Research Question 1, focusing on the playlist creation process as a means of self-expression and highlighting how these curated collections became reflective tools during the pandemic. Section 6.4 addresses Research Question 2, explaining how sharing and discussing playlists became a space to create connection and empathy—highlighting the dynamic that emerged from these shared musical narratives. Section 6.5 addresses Research Question 3, investigating the different ways music playlists served as tools for processing, documenting, and making sense of the pandemic experience. In Section 6.6, I discuss the original contributions emerging from this research. In Section 6.7, I consider the implications of these findings, clarifying how my study could impact different fields of knowledge and practice. Section 6.8 acknowledges the boundaries of this research; I reflect on the study's limitations and provide an honest evaluation of the study's constraints. In Section 6.9, I reflect on ideas for future inquiry, imagining different possibilities that could further enrich our understanding of the intersections between music and lived experiences during times of crisis. Finally, in Section 6.10, I offer a personal reflection on this transformative academic pathway, providing

insights into the emotional and intellectual journey unfurled throughout my research process.

6.2 Research Summary

This study aimed to investigate the capacity of playlists in expressing and coping with the COVID-19 lockdown in Mexico City. The research sought to comprehend how people used playlists to convey memories, emotions and experiences of the pandemic. By exam- ining playlists as a narrative tool, the research objectives were to understand how they helped people make sense of this challenging period and find meaning in their lockdown experience.

Three research questions guided this study:

1. **Research Question 1 (RQ1):** How did participants in Mexico City— and I, in Glasgow—create playlists specifically for the research study to reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown?

2. **Research Question 2 (RQ2):** What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow?

3. **Research Question 3 (RQ3):** How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?

In order to answer the research questions, I used a mixed-method approach, combining thematic analysis of interviews with an autoethnographic perspective. The data gathering relied on 25 in-depth narrative interviews and an art-based approach using music elicitation techniques. As discussed in Chapter 3, Methodology, the in-depth narrative interviews ensured that the participants shared safely their lockdown experiences, guiding the discussion in their preferred direction. Conversely, playlists, used as music art elicitation tools, played a significant role in the methodology research. The songs within these playlists served as markers, guiding and shaping the interview

process. Participants curated their playlists to express their emotions, experiences, and reflections during the lockdown, making the playlist essential in eliciting their responses. The playlists represented the stories of the participants and myself and served as a bridge for them to tell me their stories during the lockdown pandemic.

To analyse the data gathered, I used Autoethnography (e.g. Pensoneau-Conway, S. L., Adams, T. E., & Bolen, D. M., 2017. Boylorn, R. M., 2016). This approach allowed me to filter the playlists and interviews (from the participants and myself), providing an important perspective to the study. This method added another layer of insight to the study, providing a deeper understanding of the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic that the participants and I shared. Autoethnography was particularly useful for me because it allowed me to navigate the analysis of the interviews in a way that felt authentic and genuine. As mentioned in Ch.3 (Methodology), I initially was finding difficult to make sense of the participants' stories because their experiences were very close to mine. Trying to detach myself from their stories felt painful and confusing for me. However, when I shifted my approach to Autoethnography and connected my story with theirs, the analysis process felt more organic and honest.

In Chapter 4, Findings, I conducted a thematic analysis of 25 interviews and 25 playlists, including my own. Within this chapter I analysed the interviews and playlists and found intersections in the participants' narratives and my own experience. After analysing the data, I identified ten categories that emerged from the analysis (outlined in Table 4.1 from Chapter 4). These categories contained the experiences of the participants and myself during the COVID-19 lockdown. I found that these categories, such as togetherness, perseverance and internal changes, unveiled emotional patterns in how music was used during the lockdown.

In Chapter 5, I discussed the research findings and presented four Key Findings that emerged from the analysis of this data:

1. Playlist Creation Process as Reflective Storytelling

2.   Connection, Empathy, and Transformative Power of Sharing Playlists

3.   Bearing witness to the Lockdown Experience

4.   Playlists as Maps of Emotional Spaces

These four findings provided insights into the role of music during the pandemic lock- down. It sheds light on its ability to create connections and empathy. They also highlighted the significance of sharing playlists and stories behind them with others, fostering connections and transcending individual experiences to be part of a collective narrative.

In the upcoming sections, I will address the three research questions to discuss how this study contributes to the existing knowledge on the significance of playlists. Previous research has focused only on the individual aspects of playlists (Rochow., 2010. Hagen, 2016). Although numerous studies have explored the use of music during challenging times, and there are many about the COVID-19 pandemic (Fleshner, N. 2021. Gagatsis, A.,202. Hansen, 2022. Hennessy, 2021), this mainly has been on a general level and not in an in-depth reflection of the pandemic linked to the creation of playlists. My study contributes to expanding the understanding of the role of music and playlists during times of crisis, like the COVID-19 lockdown. Moreover, my studies provide a perspective on how playlists could be a means of expression, connection and reflection during this difficult period. It offers insights into how playlists were used to navigate the lockdown experience and how music was used to find solace, feel a sense of connection and document the different experiences during a crisis.

In the following section I discuss the specifics about playlist creation and reflective storytelling, examining how music became an integral part of daily life during the pandemic and the factors that influenced our experiences of the lockdown.

6.3 How did participants in Mexico City—and I, in Glasgow— create playlists specifically for the research study to reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown?

This section deepens into the playlist creation process during the COVID-19 lockdown, addressing how individuals in Mexico City (and myself in Glasgow) used playlists as a way of expression, connection and reflection on the COVID-19 lockdown. These playlists were created specifically for the study and the goal was to share it with me during the interviews.

To answer Research Question 1, under Key Finding 1KF1 aligns with RQ1 showing how the participants n Mexico City and myself in Glasgow utilised these curated playlists to express and reflect on our experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. The playlist creation process was the main focus for this RQ. I discovered how these playlists helped us engage in reflective storytelling through music and how people in Mexico City and I in Glasgow used music to cope during the COVID-19 lockdown. For the creation of the playlists, participants were asked to create a playlist that represented their lockdown experience, and the only requirement was that they used a minimum of five and a maximum of ten songs for it. Afterwards, I did the same with a friend, creating my lockdown playlist and sharing it with her. Then, during the interviews, they guided the conversations and decided how to share their playlists and tell the stories behind them to me.

The method design for the data gathering centred the participant's agency, so they felt safe to share their experiences at their own pace. Understanding that the way they chose to share their playlist was also a part of their story. This aligns with the Narrative interviewing method understanding the story is created through the interview, putting emphasis on the opportunity of the participant to tell their own experience (Kartch, 2018).

In reflecting on the playlists created for this study, it is important to acknowledge that these playlists were curated specifically for the

research. Participants, including myself, curated these playlists with the knowledge that they would be shared and discussed in an interview setting, which may have prompted deeper reflection and more deliberate song choices. The research environment likely influenced both the process of playlist creation and the way stories were told through them, as participants were not only reflecting on their personal lockdown experiences but also aware of contributing to a broader study. This context creates a dual interpretation of the playlists: they serve as personal expressions of emotion and experience, yet they are also artefacts shaped by the research process itself.

Under the theme of playlist creation and reflective storytelling, my study found out how music became integral to everyday life during the pandemic and how internal factors influenced our experiences.

This finding revolves around the process of doing a playlist during the lockdown: selecting the songs, thinking about other elements like the title, the number of songs they decided to put in it, and, for some, choosing the art that will go along with the playlists. During this research, I discovered how the diverse approaches when creating the playlists highlighted the many layers of their experiences. The song selection, the order in which we decided to put it into the playlists, showed personal milestones we experienced during the pandemic. Reflecting on the songs for our lockdown playlists allowed us to organise our experiences, memories and thoughts during the creation process. It helped us identify the songs, moments and feelings that were significant enough to be included in our playlists and determine what we wanted to convey through the playlist to tell our stories of our lockdown.

Another discovery while trying to answer this question is that the playlists reflected an ongoing development of the self in the participants and me, and that was reflected on the playlists. An example of this is Hector, who first made a "preliminary list" on a piece of paper, and then when he was sure the songs were the ones he wanted, Hector wrote the playlist in his journal, a space where he documents his life and reflects on it. He entitled his playlist "Ten songs of the quarantine (so far)",

stating that he was not sure how long the pandemic was going to last, so maybe the playlist would end up being longer collecting other memories and songs. The process of how the playlists end up in his journal due to gaining meaning enough to be there and how the playlist title states an ongoing event mirrors the experience of the pandemic we were going through.

By looking to answer this research question, I discovered that music was part of the   co-creation of their everyday life and how internal factors affected how we (participants and me) inhabited the day-by-day during the pandemic. For example, Mario explained during the interview how his playlist was a mix of both:

"The criteria is the ten songs that I listened to a lot and that I believe in the future I will remember and linked them to the pandemic. Another criterion is that these are songs that have freed me mentally. These songs have come to me like *ahhhh, an epiphany*."

Mario's explanation illustrates how his internal world, emotions, and mental state influenced the songs he selected for the playlist and listened to during the pandemic. Equally important was the criterion he chose for the playlist. Some songs evoked what he calls epiphanies -moments of revelation and self-reflection prompted by certain songs.

In response to Research Question 1, my study demonstrates how throughout the COVID-19 lockdown, personal narratives and external circumstances intersected and shaped each other, and this was captured through our playlists and stories behind them. It reveals how playlists acted as dynamic tools capturing the interaction between individual stories and the collective impact of the pandemic.Our stories behind the playlists and the elements we chose to create our playlists captured the interaction between personal narratives and the pandemic (external circumstances).

In response to Research Question 1, which investigates how individuals utilised playlists for expression and reflection during the COVID-19 lockdown, this study revealed two closely intertwined concepts. The first

concept draws from DeNora's exploration of music as a tool for continuous self-identity exploration and self-remembrance. According to DeNora (1999), music often acts as scaffolding for constructing self-identity. In the context of this research, playlists and the process of creating them served as temporal structures, enabling participants to organise, reflect and express their experience during the pandemic however they prefer. The playlists are much like scaffolding, serving in the construction of a dynamic narrative around the lockdown experience and creation of identity during the pandemic.

The playlists and the process of creating them acted as structures that helped us construct our narrative of the lockdown experience and our self-remembrance during the COVID-19 pandemic. As Hector, one of the participants, mentioned when titling his playlist "Ten songs of the quarantine (so far)", for some of us, the playlists and sense of self were in a constant state of change or construction during this period.

In the second concept, within the context of answering Research Question 1, I propose that playlists can function as metaphorical 'curio cabinets' where songs are arranged and displayed as we desire under a chosen theme, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The cura- tion of playlists involves careful selection and arrangement, considering elements like titles and cover art. As a result, the playlist offered a space to place the memories and emotions we went through during this unique time. The idea of playlists as 'curio cabinets' is inspired by Hagen's (2016) exploration of music as a collectable entity, which was influenced by Baudrillard's concept of collection (1968).

In conclusion, in the pursuit of answering this research question, I discovered that playlists served as devices. As scaffolding and curio cabinets, providing us with a tool of self-expression and reflection. Specifically, they serve as structures for constructing narratives and organised spaces for containing our memories and emotions related to the COVID-19 lockdown experience.

6.4 Research Question 2 (RQ2): What was revealed in and through the dialogue elicited by the sharing and discussion of these research-specific playlists among participants in Mexico City and myself in Glasgow?

This question was answered focusing on the collective and social interaction that emerged from the participants and me while they shared, they're playlists and experience of lockdown during the interview. Focusing on the social aspects of the playlists within the context of the pandemic, I unveiled how sharing and discussing our lockdown playlists and the experiences within created a channel of connection and a sense of belonging with each other These findings follow up the earlier step of reflecting on the creation process of the playlists, which was made in solitude and included self-reflection to the next step of sharing the stories behind the playlists. Following by telling someone else the personal story behind the playlists and their internal logic was an aspect that involved social connection, bringing another aspect to this study.

This research provided insights into this inquiry by studying the connections established while the participants shared playlists with me and the show of empathy and shared experiences. Sharing playlists emerged as a powerful conduit for connection, transcending individual narratives to create a shared understanding of the challenges faced during the pandemic. I highlight the role of playlists as a way of reflecting on our personal experiences, emotions and narratives during a specific time. These dialogues that emerged from our interactions connected two spaces with the interviews and discussions bridging Glasgow and Mexico City, offering a space for us to talk about our fears and hopes during this historical time.

Creating our playlists reflecting about our lockdown experience involved reflecting on our personal experiences and selecting songs that resonated with our emotions and narratives we wanted to share. I conducted the interviews via Zoom in Glasgow while my participants

were in Mexico City. These interviews were among the few connections with my language and culture during great stress, sadness and uncertainty.

Finding out how the act of sharing the playlist contributed to understanding that a sense of connection and empathy emerged through sharing and discussing playlists during the COVID-19 lockdown, through aspects as finding experiences in common, such as losing someone due to the pandemic or having mixed feelings about the lockdown. Van Djick's (2006) work provided a valuable lens to understand how these playlists-built bridges for empathy and communication. Van Dijck's studies demonstrate how sharing musical memories and engaging in conversations about popular music can promote social interaction and the creation of individual and collective identities (van Djick, 2006).

These interactions took place across international spaces, with people from different countries —and different pandemic contexts. These connections served as a significant lifeline for me, since I was isolated and going through grief, stress and uncertainty in a different country than my homeland. For the participants, it was a space to discuss their losses and struggles and find commonalities that we may not have expected. For example, Mario, one of the participants from Colombia, had a similar situation about staying in a different country (Mexico) while his family was in his home country. Talking with me about his experience and reflecting on his playlists during the interview created a space where he could express his longing and sorrow for being away from his family while being just a spectator of how the pandemic developed in his country. And it allowed me to discover that just like me, Mario was relieved that he was not causing additional problems to his family by caring for himself and isolating himself in his flat alone in Mexico.

The same happened with the participants who sadly lost someone during the pandemic. For me, it was a relief to talk with someone who understood about not having the chance to say goodbye to our loved ones or the sorrow of knowing they most likely passed away alone as shown repeatedly in the news and any social media platform.

The incorporation of Campos Valverde's concept of "imagined listening" (Campos Valverde, 2020) enriches the understanding of playlist sharing. It reveals the internal process of playlist creation and participants' envisioning of an audience (in this case, the researcher) engaging with the music. This concept, when applied to the creation of playlists during the lockdown, reveals the internal process of playlist creation and how participants envisioned an audience (in this case, me) engaging with the music.

Combining van Djick (2006) and Campos Valverde's (2020) concepts allowed me to answer how playlists served as a shared medium of communication and a source of shared experience. Curating and sharing their playlists allowed the participants and me to connect with each other through different aspects of our experience. This action provided a sense of belonging and comfort, helping us realise that we were not alone in how we were struggling during a lockdown.

From a cross-cultural perspective, the research provided a unique viewpoint involving participants from Mexico and reflecting on my experience in Glasgow. It demonstrates that the feeling of uncertainty and fear during the COVID-19 lockdown was a shared experience transcending geographical boundaries.

Addressing Research Question 2, grounded the experiences revealed in this study. It shows that playlist sharing was a dynamic process that fostered connections, empathy, and reduced feelings of isolation during the COVID-19 lockdown.

Bearing Witness to the Lockdown Experience

Building upon the themes of connection and empathy established in KF 2, the Key Finding 3, "Bearing Witness to the Lockdown Experience," provides a nuanced understanding of how the act of sharing and discussing personal playlists contributes to a sense of connection and collective understanding during the COVID-19 lockdown.

The research underscores that the meaning of this connection was not only due to the shared experience of music but also extended to the narratives that emerged during our interactions. My findings show how playlists were used as tools for processing and understanding the COVID-19 pandemic experience in conversation with others.

I found the principles of Narrative medicine (Charon, 2009) to align with the interview process conducted in this study. Both centre the priority on the individual's narrative agency in storytelling. Revealing how sharing stories captures past experiences while actively shaping our present understanding. This discovery is important in answering Research Question 2, it provided a framework to explore the different dimensions of the process of sharing the playlist. It helped highlight the significance of narratives in our understanding of the COVID-19 experience.

When participants shared their playlists with me, we created a platform for sharing musical memories and stories. Narrative medicine underscores the importance of sharing these stories and listening closely to what the other has to say and what they consider relevant to tell us.

Building upon Charon's approach, which views interviews as a form of storytelling and bearing witness, I drew inspiration from the concept of Affective Witnessing developed by Richardson and Schankweiler (2019, 2020). Additionally, I considered the notion of vulnerability, as thoughtfully discussed by Zembylas (2021), to introduce the concept of: "Shared Experiential Witnessing" to capture the significance of the act of mutual recognition and connection within shared narratives.

The concept of "Shared Experiential Witnessing," introduced in this study, offers a perspective that aligns with the research question's intent. It highlights the transformation that occurs when bearing witness to shared experiences, emphasising the recognition of reciprocal witnessing. It centres on individuals or groups sharing their experiences and reflections in the context of a specific event or period, such as the COVID-19 lockdown. Framed into this term, I highlight the experience of the person being witnessed. Drawing from my experience, the act of feeling seen and heard by the participant was meaningful. It provided me with a

source of support (even when they were not aware of it) while facing a period of grief and uncertainty and positively affected my mental health during that time and for months and years ahead.

In the context of Research Question 2, this KF demonstrates that the exchange was not only one-sided. It became an ongoing dialogue where participants and I could reflect on our experiences of the pandemic. The playlist and the dialogues that it elicited allow us to reflect and express our fears, hopes and thoughts about the lockdown in a framework that felt safe and established for that cause. What emerged was a non-planned act of empathy between participants and I. An act of bearing witness through the playlist-sharing interactions and the conversations we had thanks to the playlists. This finding expands the discourse on the social dimensions of playlist sharing, highlighting its role in building bridges of understanding and support during times of crisis.

6.5 Research Question 3 (RQ3): How did the creation of the playlists and the dialogue they elicited contribute to how participants and I processed and made sense of our pandemic experiences?

Research Question 3 aimed to understand and learn more about how music playlists served as tools for processing, documenting, and making sense of the pandemic experience. This study found that playlists could be framed as dynamic maps representing individual and collective experiences and emotions during the lockdown. Drawing inspiration from Maddrell's (2016) work on grief as a mapping process, it reveals how playlists served as spatial and emotional landmarks, offering a different perspective on the pandemic's impact on people.

Throughout this research, I discovered that playlists can be seen from the perspective of dynamic and constantly evolving tools for self-expression and storytelling. They can also provide insight into the collective experience of a specific moment in time. Framing the playlist as a map of the emotions and experiences we collectively went through on our journey of lockdown offers a particular perspective into the

emotional maps of this pandemic, particularly in the context of Mexico City and Glasgow. Understanding the nuances we collectively experienced during this challenging time adds a deeper understanding of how this historical event impacted us personally and collectively. The study uncovers intersections and shared emotional spaces, reflecting the collective journey through the pandemic through framing playlists as dynamic tools for self-expression and storytelling.

This framework helps understand playlists not only as internal landmarks but also as reflections of emotional responses and coping mechanisms during the lockdown. Despite physical restrictions, playlists serve as a means to map internal signposts and emotional spaces, offering a unique perspective on the lockdown experience.

Through interviews, creating their lockdown playlists, and analysing them through Auto-ethnography to connect my experience with them, I understood how we used music to cope with and navigate our pandemic experience. The opportunity to compare and overlap our playlists allowed me to see how most of us used music in similar ways during this time. The playlists, interpreted as dynamic maps, helped me discover intersections and emotional spaces we shared through the pandemic lockdown.

Building on the work of scholars like Maddrell (2016), who explores grief as a mapping process, I used this conceptual framework to understand the creation and sharing of our playlist lockdown as a dynamic and reflective practice of our experience of the lockdown. This finding shows that a playlist can be seen as a map of individual and collective experiences and emotions during a specific time.

Maddrell's insights of how the experiences of grief and mourning can also be understood in 'spatial' terms, (Maddrell, 2016) and explains how grief is influenced by and at the same interacts with the physical and emotional environments in which they take place.

This study highlights a form of mapping derived from internal landmarks contrasting with the restriction of physical spaces. The lockdown

experience, denoted by isolation and limited physical mobility, initiated an array of internal signposts and emotional spaces. The 'spatialities' mapped through the playlists are more about coping mechanisms, emotional responses and memories the participants and I navigated during the lockdown. When observing them all together as an ensemble, I found a portrayal of the different emotional spaces of the lockdown we inhabited.

Through analysing shared emotional nodes and intersections in the playlists and guiding from the findings and patterns I categorised in Chapter 4; I found that it was possible to frame these categories as landmarks of our collective experience. The emotional and experiential nodes described in the identified categories: *Togetherness, Internal Changes, Loss, Anger, Feel-Good Moments, Perseverance, Interconnection, Lockdown Experience, and Post-Pandemic Future* formed a map (Chapter 5, Figure 5.1) representing the nuances of our lockdown experience. This map reflected the different emotions and milestones we went through during the pandemic lockdown. It represents the significant moments and emotions shared with other participants, often without them realising it. Within this intersection of spatial and emotional geographies, this collective map offers insights and guidance on the emotional spaces we inhabit during the COVID-19 lockdown.

This map became a tool for understanding and reflecting on shared experiences and emotions, directly addressing the research question regarding how playlists served as tools for processing the pandemic experience. This perspective of playlists as a map is aimed at people from different backgrounds and experiences engaging with it and reflecting on their emotional lockdown maps, and by doing so, it creates a space for a reflection on the shared experiences and emotions during this time of collective uncertainty.

6.6 Original Contribution

This study on playlists during the COVID-19 lockdown offers significant contributions to our understanding of music's role in times of crisis. It

provides insights into the emotional patterns experienced during the lockdown and the diverse uses of playlists against this backdrop. By adopting a participant-centred approach, the research explores various methods of playlist creation and the significance of reflective curation. It introduces the concepts of playlists as scaffolding for self-narrative and curio cabinets for emotional memories, enriching the theoretical perspective on playlists during specific events.

A. The research studied the different approaches the participants and I took to create their lock-down playlists, showing the significance of every element used during curation and creation. My study introduces two concepts: playlists as scaffolding structures and curio cabinets for self-narrative and storing emotional memories. These concepts enriched the theoretical perspective on playlists within the context of the COVID-19 lockdown in two distinct geographical locations: Mexico City and Glasgow.

B. My study contributes insights into the personal and collective aspects of playlist creation during a crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Studying how playlists became a channel of empathy and shared experiences, this research brings a insightful understanding of the act of creation and sharing playlist as meaningful actions. These actions can create a sense of connection during challenging times such as the pandemic.

C. This research also offers a unique contribution connecting the act of sharing playlists during the lockdown with principles of narrative medicine . Understanding that our experience during the pandemic was holistic, embedded body and mind and affected our internal and external dimensions. The introduction of the "Shared Experiential Witnessing" concept adds a dimension that focuses on the reciprocal and transformative impact of sharing narratives during a specific context, such as the COVID-19 lockdown.

D. My experience, expressed through the effect of being seen and heard by people with a shared context, adds insights to the knowledge about the participant-researcher dynamic in qualitative interviews, specifically during emotionally demanding research. This insight also reflects on the personal impact of being witnessed during a vulnerable time. It highlights how this positively impacted the way I cope with my grief from that day onwards.

E. My study aimed to also give a collective perspective of the lockdown experience. Studying the intersection and shared emotional spaces through playlists, my study identified landmarks of collective experiences during lockdown through a map that serves as a reflective tool, giving insight and guidance on the emotional spaces inhabited by the participants and me during the COVID-19 lockdown. This study contributes to knowledge by offering a frame from which to see the different and collective emotional spatialities we inhabit during lockdown through the study of playlists—con- tributing to a richer understanding of the emotional geographies we had during the COVID-19 pandemic.

F. Through examining and reflecting on the playlists, the finding highlights the distinctive narrative qualities inherent to the playlist format, challenging the conventional notion of narratives as predominantly visual. Moreover, its nature can be adaptable to almost any platform, such as the participants showed to have created them in commonly used platforms such as Spotify, iTunes or YouTube. Some participants used pen and paper, the notes application on their phone or, like Nere, just plain oral storytelling, going through her lockdown experience with me and telling me her playlists as the interview happened. This array of possibilities to convey songs into a playlist evokes a narrative rich in affective elements and personal stories.

G. This thesis contributes to the scholarly debates on playlists by proving their role as tools for narrative expression and emotional reflection. Building on Kibby (2009) and Hagen (2015), it reveals how

playlists created specifically to tell our stories of the COVID-19 lockdown served as structured frameworks for personal and collective storytelling. The research introduces concepts such as playlists as scaffolding for self-narrative and curio cabinets for emotional memories, illustrating how participants and I used the creation of playlists to tell a specific experience. Using the playlist as a way to construct and document our emotional experiences and narratives during a crisis. Additionally, the thesis engages with DeNora's (1999, 2000, 2006) concept of music as a scaffolding tool for emotional reflection, illustrating how playlists during the COVID-19 lockdown functioned as scaffolding structures for navigating challenging experiences. My research highlights how playlists served as both frameworks for emotional reflection and containers for shared memories. It underscores the role of playlists as social practices and collective memory tools. This contribution enriches the understanding of music consumption demonstrating how playlists can facilitate emotional connection and create communal bonds during challenging times.

H. This research contributes to scholarly debates on the social meanings and uses of music by illustrating how playlists functioned as crucial tools for emotional expression and social connection during the COVID-19 lockdown. By expanding on Rochow's (2010) concept of playlists as social objects, the study demonstrates their role in facilitating new forms of communication and bonding amidst isolation. Additionally, it builds on Harris's (2020) exploration of music's role in memory and connection, revealing how playlists served as contemporary rituals for emotional expression and community-building. Aligning with Boer's (2014) research on musical rituals and Sloboda's (2011, 2016) work on emotional regulation, this study shows how playlists functioned as tools for self-regulation, offering a richer understanding of music's role in fostering social cohesion and managing complex emotional experiences in challenging times.

I. The methodological contribution of this thesis is grounded in its particular participant-centred and autoethnographic approach, which allowed for a deep exploration of personal and collective experiences during the COVID-19 lockdown. In the context of autoethnography, a significant finding emerged from my process of self-reflection and rest. After conducting the interviews and collecting playlists, I gave myself time to step back from the material before revisiting it for analysis. This intentional temporal bridge was crucial, allowing me to return to the data with a fresh perspective. This practice of creating space for reflection between the collection and analysis of data demonstrates how the autoethnographic method can be enhanced by incorporating self-care and time for emotional processing. Especially to emotionally demanding research such as the one I endeavoured. A key aspect of this methodology was my willingness to engage vulnerably with participants, a practice that shaped both the interview process and data analysis. The use of playlists as a methodological tool further contributed to the thesis's methodological approach. Playlists became dynamic frameworks to explore the lockdown experience through the dialogues elicited during the interviews. Finally, the research demonstrated the significance of creating a participant-researcher dynamic based on empathy and reciprocity. My experience of being seen and heard during the study became part of the methodological process, underlining how vulnerability and shared context between researcher and participants can lead to a richer, more nuanced understanding of the data, particularly relevant in emotionally charged research settings.

J. As a final contribution, this research was a platform to amplify the voices of diverse individuals during the COVID-19 lockdown, particularly in Mexico City. When the participants shared their stories and experiences through their playlists, this study was able to be a channel to tell the narratives of those experiencing chronic illnesses, caregivers, activists, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals and those mourning losses. The research provides insight into a vulnerable moment in

their lives, highlighting how we experienced and navigated the challenges of the pandemic. It also underscores the different ways the pandemic impacted daily routines and long-term goals. Additionally, using playlists as a narrative tool added a distinct dimension to their stories.

6.7 Implications

My research has some suggestions with implications for researchers and policymakers. Encouraging an autoethnographic lens, researchers could find that it adds depth to their investigations by acknowledging and integrating personal circumstances. For policymakers, the study advocates recognising the potent role of music playlists as tools for improving mental health and community strengthening. There are possibilities for policymakers to use playlists in practical pathways to enhance the well-being of communities and promote inclusivity. Amplifying systemically minoritised voices through playlists could also be a potential use of playlists for fostering empathy and understanding as a novel approach.

Implication for Researchers: Acknowledging Personal Circumstances in Emotionally Demanding Research

In emotionally charged research, particularly those exploring personal and affecting topics, researchers may benefit from embracing an autoethnographic approach. The traditional notion of maintaining a detached, clinical stance may constrict the research instead of allowing more dimension and depth to the study, not allowing it to pay justice to the complex dynamics at play. I consider that by sharing our circumstances and struggles in the research process and acknowledging our journey and struggles, researchers can add authenticity and depth to their studies.

Autoethnography encourages vulnerability and transparency, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of the research process and the reciprocal impact on both researchers and participants. I acknowledged

the reciprocal dynamic I encountered during the interviews with my participants because of my Autoethnography approach. Otherwise, although it happened, I might not have integrated it into my study. Future researchers diving into emotionally demanding topics might find this method helpful, noticing that it might enrich the quality and depth of their investigations by allowing themselves to be nuanced in their academic approach. This practice can help the integrity of the research and serve as a more just pathway, honouring the complexities of human experience and presenting them in an authentic and genuine framework.

Implications for Policy Makers

Utilising Playlists for Mental Health and Community Strengthening

Policymakers could benefit from endorsing initiatives centring the power of music through playlists as integral tools for promoting mental health and strengthening com- munity bonds. Specifically, policymakers could consider supporting programs that advocate for the use of collective playlists as innovative tools for community-building and resilience fostering. Drawing from successful workshops I have already conducted, such as those engaging QTIPOC and people with disabilities, collective playlists have proven effective in creating safe spaces for open dialogue on topics like fear, uncertainty, and reflection on strategies for enforcing collective care and liberation. These workshops can serve as models for future policy considerations, showcasing the potential for playlists to be valuable agents in community well-being programs.

Fostering Well-being and Equality for people who are incarcerated

Policymakers would benefit from exploring innovative programs within correctional facilties that leverage the power of music through playlists to contribute to mental health and well-being and foster reparative justice. Autobiographical and collective playlists can serve as transformative tools within prison settings, providing incarcerated individuals with a means to express their stories and emotions within a held safe space. By creating playlists and a space to share and discuss them with others, these programs could shed light on systemic

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inequalities that incarcerated individuals share, which could high- light the intersections of poverty, race, disability, and other factors that contribute to the complexities within our communities. This approach aligns with the broader agenda that the stories encapsulated in playlists can serve as powerful narratives that illustrate the urgent need for social justice and equality before the law.

Amplifying Historically Marginalised Communities

Supporting projects that amplify historically marginalised communities through platforms like radio programs, where individuals can share their stories via curated playlists, can contribute to a more inclusive and supportive society. For example, in Scotland, I have previously been involved in planning programs where women in asylum and immigration system in Glasgow will have the space to share their life stories through playlists, fostering reflection and dialogue. By integrating narrative musical playlists fo- cusing on diverse representation and centre individuals from communities being systematically oppressed, policymakers can play an important role in building bridges for discussions about intersectionality and systemic oppression. As well as creating spaces and strategies to actively deconstruct these issues, whether through radio stations or online platforms.

6.8 Limitations of the Study and Methodological Lessons Learned

In this section, I will address the limitations of the study while also reflecting on the lessons I learned from using autoethnography througout to make sense of the data gathered in my research.

Limitations of the Study

While this study was thoroughly planned and developed and has contributed to understanding the role of music and playlists during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to acknowledge its limitations.

The sample, while diverse, was still not extensive enough to fully represent the broader demographic diversity within Mexico City, limiting the applicability of the study to a more extensive population. Upon reflection, the participants were all from a range of ages between 21 and 45, which inherently left outside any contribution or perspective of the experience of people younger or older than that range of age. Furthermore, being unable to be present in Mexico City while doing the interviews closed the scope to people without internet access. Conducting interviews remotely excluded people without internet access, especially in certain areas within the conurbation where internet is not that accessible in every home.

Conducting the interviews via Zoom is one of what I consider the more significant limitations. While this was a necessary adaptation during the pandemic, it could have influenced the depth of engagement compared to traditional in-person interviews. Technical issues, like internet failures, audio problems at some moments of the interviews or different comfort levels with technology from the participant's side, might have affected the quality of interactions and the depth of information gathered.

However, it is important to consider that conducting interviews remotely might have also served as an enabler. The distance provided by the virtual format could have been a more open space for an honest and introspective discussions for some participants, as they were able to share their thoughts from the comfort of their own homes. The participants and even myself, might have felt less constrained by social norms or personal anxieties that could arise in face-to-face settings. Being in our own space feeling comfortable with our surroundings and having the online distance as a buffer, might also have allowed for a more honest and vulnerable dialogue and interaction. Thus, while remote interviews presented challenges, they also offered unique opportunities for deeper engagement in certain contexts.

Temporal constraints represent another limitation, considering I conducted the research during a specific period of the COVID-19

pandemic, a pre-vaccine period where we were still uncertain of many things. This time frame allowed for an in-depth study of experiences during a significant period, but it also limited the findings to the specific circumstances and challenges of that time. As a result, this approach to the evolution of the pandemic during other significant periods, such as a post-vaccine pandemic and any perspective or comparative knowledge that could have been drawn from there.

However, this limitation could also be seen as a strength. The pre-vaccine period was a time when anxieties about COVID-19 and the effects of lockdown were at their most acute, and capturing experiences from this critical moment offers valuable insights into the heightened emotions and challenges we were facing during that specific window of time. This snapshot of the lockdown may provide deeper insights into how individuals coped with the uncertainty and fear that characterised this phase of the pandemic.

Methodological Lessons learned while doing this study

Exploring Shared Experiences with Autoethnography as a Guide

Embracing subjectivity through autoethnography enhanced the depth of the research and provided me with inside knowledge of the specific intersection I was located during this study. In her work about autoethnography and the use of music to cope with divorce, Fung (2016) underscores that Autoethnography allows researchers to tell stories while incorporating their critical reflections (Fung, 2016). This perspective aligns with my research, where autoethnography was an essential tool for capturing the participant's experience and mine during the COVID-19 lockdown.

A key lesson I learned was the delicate balance required in navigating the dual roles of participant and researcher. While autoethnography facilitated a deeper engagement with the research, it also demanded careful management of my emotional responses and triggers. Balancing the integration of personal experiences with maintaining the focus on participants' narratives required ongoing reflexivity. I had to constantly

ensure that my reflections of my experiences of lockdown and the challenges I faced, did not overshadow the participants' voices. This lesson reinforced the importance of reflexivity in autoethnographic research in emotionally demanding research undertaken in vulnerable situations such as the pandemic.

Impact of Emotional and Mental Health on Data Interpretation

Another significant lesson learned is how much of an impact my emotional and mental health could impact the data interpretation and analysis. During the course of this research, my personal experiences of grief and stress related to the pandemic significantly influenced the research process. This period of intense emotional challenge highlighted the crucial need to acknowledge and manage my mental state, first as a priority of my mental health and second to

A notable instance of this was when I made the decision to pause the research to address my mental health needs, which provided a opportunity for reflection and recharging. This pause was instrumental, I was burned out from working on the research nonstop while going still through the pandemic and grief. When I came back from the break, I was able to understand the data on a deeper and clearer level. This experience underscored the importance of self-care and periodic breaks in maintaining a balanced perspective.

6.9 Ideas for Future Inquiry

This study has underscored different elements and topics that would be interesting to follow through in further research. Such as investigating playlists as a document of historical and challenging moments, like the COVID-19 pandemic, using Autoethnography to navigate emotionally demanding research and understanding the correlation between collective connection and well-being. The following suggestions offer potential ideas for future research:

- **Approach from a Longitudinal Analysis:** Doing more research through a longitudinal study would be helpful to study the evolving use of

music represented through playlist creation during times of crisis. To study the emotional patterns developed over an extended period to observe how playlist themes and affect content evolved after the pandemic. The data gathered would contribute to a better understanding of the long-term impact of the pandemic through the participant's playlists.

- **Technological Platforms:** Develop studies focusing on the choice of the participant's technological platforms (e.g., streaming services, social media) and how it affects playlist creation and sharing. Further research is needed on the role of platforms in shaping the creation and sharing of playlists and technology's impact on music-related practices.

- **Impact on Mental Health:** It would be interesting to conduct a deeper study of the impact of playlist creation and sharing related to mental health. To understand how engaging in creating a playlist to tell a challenging experience could be good practice and contribute to resilience or recovery, focusing on giving insights into mental health support programs.

- **Collaborative Playlists:** Conduct a comprehensive study of the collaborative playlist creation dynamics among groups or communities. This study will help to gain more knowledge and better understand how creating and sharing playlists collectively could foster a sense of connection and well-being. It could also give insights into the community aspects of playlist practices and add to a collective narrative.

These suggestions are only a few possible directions for future enquiry that I consider relevant.

6.10 Personal Reflection

This research has mirrored the trajectory of my life throughout the pandemic, taking a parallel course with my journey. Over the past three years, my life has gone a 180-degree turn, radically reshaping my

perspectives on what holds true importance to me. The loss of my parents during the pandemic meant bringing my foundations to the ground and rebuilding myself and my whole identity as I knew it. I stopped being a daughter but that also meant redirecting the intention of how I was living my life. The one thing that remained constant is my love and commitment to this study.

As a first-generation doctoral student from Mexico, making my parents proud was a significant driving force behind my research. Particularly my father —my greatest hype man and best friend—, who sacrificed immensely for my journey to be here. I reflect on the quantum leap I took as the first person in my family to study abroad, when none of my parents ever held a passport, and how that underscores the magnitude of my journey. Nonetheless, I know that wherever I go, I will always carry them with me.

Pursuing higher education was a step towards breaking barriers and creating opportunities for me and my loved ones. I was able to study in Scotland thanks to a scholarship I earned in my home country. But even with the scholarship, my family had to contribute financially to help me cover the costs of getting here. It was a collective effort.

Learning to navigate academia felt like deciphering a secret code; I think about some PhD students I met whose one or both parents had doctorate degrees and how they seemed to exist and moved in this realm as if they had a secret code or a map that I somehow had failed to obtain. Nevertheless, I persisted, mainly for the promise of a better future and the collective effort it took to be here.

When everything else was crumbling around me, the only steady element was this study, especially the stories of my participants, their songs that became my songs and the kindness they gave me during times I did not know I needed it. In a way, I think I fell in love again with academia while doing the interviews and later trying to make sense of their stories. I felt a responsibility to make sense of their narratives and struggles in a way that honoured them.

The past year, I ended up in an episode of anxiety and depression episode. I was experiencing what my therapist and doctors told me was "complicated grief," expected given the loss of my parents and the way they died. My therapist explained that, in a way, losing them during the pandemic and due to COVID-19 was similar to someone losing a loved one in an earthquake or an attack. There is a collective grief beyond the personal one, a constant reminder of losses through the media and overall comments around you. I was barely existing for the last months of 2022. My family, friends, and I consider it a victory that I am still here. I am not sure how I survived last year, but I am happy I did.

Through all that time of struggling with depression and burnout, I kept on coming and working (sometimes if barely) on this research. It seems apparently, to be an increase of awareness about mental health and mental illness after the pandemic, but in reality, what I have encountered is a significant lack of understanding and impatience from different sides asking for me to "go back to normal" and to start being productive and social engaged again.

What helped me understand my struggle and be patient with myself was something Isa, one of the participants, said about the song *Subterranean Homesick Alien* by Radiohead. She talks about how that song is about longing for something impossible to recover and compares it with us longing for a normality impossible to return to anymore. Isa says our reality might look similar to the one before, but we have endured so many losses and changes that it will never be the same. Isa lost both of her parents in an accident when she was 15, and I think she was talking about this collective grief with an inner knowledge of surviving the end of the world (in her particular story) and the aftermath of it.

During all this time analysing the stories and playlists of the participants and researching the pandemic's impact, I learned a great deal about how much this crisis forever shocked our internal beliefs and reality. Still, there is a huge effort to move past all the struggles and realisations we had during lockdown, almost as if we want to forget it happened. I wish we did not do that because it did happen, and it changed us. Some

meaningful knowledge I learned during my grief was to be patient and not rush the healing. An open wound can also be a portal to learn about the power of our tenderness.

I am sure this study saved me as much as it might have re-traumatised me by writing and reading over and over about the pandemic and the stories and struggles of my participants and myself for the last three years, but I would not have it any other way.

My aspiration for this research is to extend it beyond theoretical exploration, grounded in my belief that this academic pursuit should offer a tangible and practical impact. I aim to explore how playlists can serve as beacons of strength and community, particularly where needed. I aim for this study to step further than its current academic dimension and help me create ways to amplify the power of narratives and music. This journey expanded my understanding and reinforced my commitment to creating initiatives and projects that foster resilience, connection and collective care.

Appendix 1. Consent Form

Consent Form

Title of Project: Playlists and longing: A playlist that expresses the longing of a place through the experience of the Covid-19 lockdown in Mexico City

Name of Researcher: Valeria Gascon Grajales

Please tick as appropriate

Yes ☐

Yes ☐

Yes ☐

Yes ☐ Yes ☐

No ☐ No ☐ No ☐

No ☐ No ☐

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask quesncedtions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent to interviews being video and audio-recorded

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I acknowledge that participants will be identified by name in any publications arising from the research.

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I agree that:

Yes ☐ Yes ☐ Yes ☐ Yes ☐ Yes ☐

Yes ☐

No ☐ No ☐ No ☐ No ☐ No ☐

No ☐

All names and other material likely to identify individuals will be anonymised.

The material will be treated as confidential and kept in secure storage at all times.

The material will be retained in secure storage for use in future academic research

The material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

I waive my copyright to any data collected as part of this project.

Other authenticated researchers may use my words in publications, reports, web pages, and other research outputs, only if they agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information as requested in this form

I agree to take part in this research study ☐
Name of Participant ....
Signature ....

Date ....

Name of
Researcher ....Signature ....
.... Date ....

Appendix 2. Participant Information Sheet

University of Glasgow

College of Social Sciences

Study title: Playlists and longing: A playlist that expresses the longing of a place through the experience of the Covid-19 lockdown in Mexico City

Researcher: Valeria Gascón Grajales

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will in- volve. Please read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask the researcher if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take some time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

What is the purpose of this study?

This research will investigate the subject of playlists and the way these are connected to the longing of a place (the yearning or desire to want to be somewhere else) through the experience of confinement in Mexico City, during the Covid-19 lockdown. The re- search seeks to explore:

1.How are musical playlists linked to the longing of a place by Mexico City residents in confinement? And how is not being able to be physically in one place may make a connection with it deeper and more meaningful?

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2. In what ways may a collective playlist be more or less effective in creating connection and community in the digital context of Mexico City residents?

3. How may the above collective playlist be a narrative tool to tell a story or express emotions of a certain moment and place?
Through the participant narratives, the research aims to reflect on their experiences and the role music and songs played in their lives during the global Covid-19 pandemic.

What does this involve for you?

If you take part in this project, it means that you are a person that likes music, has knowledge about the creation and listening of playlists, and went through the experi- ence of the Covid-19 lockdown in Mexico City, which means you are the representative individual of this research. The purpose of this study is to find out how you used music as a way to go through your lockdown and how these experiences affected the desire of being somewhere else. This study will also explore how you used playlists and songs to connect with people during your lockdown and in which ways (did you created them? Did you listen to some specific theme? to name some examples).

If you decide to take part in this project you will be meeting me for an individual inter- view via online, during this time you will tell me anything you like to share with me about your experiences regarding music, songs and playlists and your experience in your everyday life during lockdown. Each interview may last between 45 minutes and 1 hour approximately, the interview will be in the form of a video call, via Zoom, using my university of Glasgow email. The audio-visual files stored will be downloaded and encrypted immediately after every interview. I will send you a consent form for you to be aware that you are giving me your permission to video-record your interview, and your consent will be recorded at the beginning of your interview. It is also possible to participate in the interviews and not have you recorded.

Please consider that this research involves talking about your experience during lockdown confinement, this could mean that reflecting on these experiences could cause some distress in you. Is important for you to know that if you decide to take part, you can interrupt the interview or leave the research at any time without any kind of consequence and without providing any reason and if after you have started to take part, you change your mind, you can let me know at any moment.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as is possible unless, during our conversation, I hear anything which makes me worried that someone might be in danger of harm, I might have to inform relevant agencies of this.

Research data gathered from the interviews besides being used for my Doctoral Thesis in Interdisciplinary Studies could be re-used for journal articles, conference papers, sub- missions, and/or written summary of results if requested.

The data produced and gathered will be stored in one of the backed-up storage options available to university researchers for managing this kind of data: OwnCloud Research.

This research project is subject to external funding by CONACYT Mexican Government Scholarship.

The personal data such as real interviewees' names and emails will not be stored more than after my Viva takes places. After that, approximately October 2022, any information will be erased using a secure removal software.

The following is the information contact in case you want to reach me or my supervisor: Supervisor:
Oscar Odena
Email: oscar.odena@glasgow.ac.uk

Researcher: Valeria Gascon
Email: XXXXXXXX@student.gla.ac.uk

This project has been considered and approved by the College Research Ethics Commit- tee, College of Social Sciences

To pursue any complaint about the conduct of the research: contact the College of So- cial Sciences Ethics Officer, Dr Muir Houston, email: Muir.Houston@glasgow.ac.uk

_____End of Participant Information Sheet_____

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Appendix 3. Meme used for participant recruitment

Appendix 4. Narrative Interview 1

Nere's Interview

Generally, when I go to bathe, for example, is when I put the music on. I play a song like Tim Maya's album when I bathe. Or if I take a bath in the afternoon... you know, these things are intimate, but at the same time, I think they're important to share with you. If I bathe in the afternoon when the sun is already setting, I play more songs like the Jun- gle album, or I play either the album or the session they did for KXP. It seems super in- timate to me and with other rhythms (than the album). One of the backup singers is trans, and I like to see that backup singer. And the rhythms that Jungle works with come to me from emotions. It's an album that I discovered in quarantine. I first heard of Jun- gle in 2019 but explored them more during the pandemic.

With C, my partner, here at home, we had a New Year's celebration, and it was really cool because one of the things that happened after midnight was when you hugged each other, and it was officially New Year's. He told me to play a song for us for the new year, and then I played the song *Nos deseo by Tremenda with Cumbia Queers*. That song reminds me of my partner, and we danced to it during the pandemic new year at home together, the two of us alone and in my house and at twelve o'clock when he told me to play a New Year's song.

Before, when we were having dinner before midnight and celebrating the new year, he really liked the KXP sessions, and we saw Jungle and Juana Molina, which is a great ses- sion. We saw it complete. I mean, we got into a game; that's a really cool moment to tell you. *You play a song, and then I play another*. And I remember that another song I played this New Year that really moved me was by Nina Simone called *Ain't Got No Life*. And that reminds me of that moment, of being in a new pandemic. These songs mark the new year of the pandemic.

(For the game) he put on a group called *Los Chalanes del Amor*. That New Year, I discov- ered that group because of him. He played it for me, he played me a song that I really like, *Cariñito*.

Do you have new memories with songs during this pandemic?

Yeah. On Saturday, my friend J came to your house, and I called and played a song by *Linda Quebrada*, a trans artist from Brazil. We watched it together, and J told me, '*oh we should do something like that because there are a lot of girls in the video trans united crying and singing*'. So, because we are in the middle of a pandemic, Jessica came to visit me, and this song marked me. Not because of what was in the video but because of Linn's voice and what it means to me that my trans sisters sing, right?.

I see that it is important for me to listen to the songs my friends sang on my last birth- day, which is the last one I could celebrate in a massive way. I celebrate my birthday with a big performance, which has already become a birthday ritual. I did my perfor- mance and invited all my friends, but this year I couldn't do it; I was with my housemates and C. It was a small party, and I had a big celebration last year. There was a part of the performance where I sang a song. Even though I'm not a singer, I sang live for the audience and liked doing that for my performances. Before singing, I told the

audience *well, I am not a professional singer, but I want to show you my voice* and I started singing. A song that I sang a lot in my performances at the end is Mercedes Sosa's Cambia todo Cambia, another one is *Volver* the Chavela Vargas' version and *Volver a los 17* by Violeta Parra.

What a good question you asked me. Now I'm remembering. Memories come flooding back. Yesterday, I wanted to listen to a song. I really wanted to, but I couldn't because I had a lot of things going on. I think it's (I am not putting the name of the song because it is the actual name of the participant) by -, but I love the Mecano cover. In 2017, I did a performance in which I removed my makeup. I appeared with a lot of makeup, and dur- ing the performance, I gave towel wipes to the people there. I asked them to remove my makeup, and after they had removed it, I told them: *I am this. This is what I am*. And *I feel good being like this*. And then I went on to hug the people deeply, each one of them, and while that was happening, that was the song playing. Which is a song that has my name. Yesterday, I really wanted to listen to that song. It

moves because it has my name and many things that are powerful for me.

She sings a part of the song. I am very intense; I am totally crossed by metaphors. I am crossed by affection. It's cool to say that I have a song that represents me.

She sings another little bit (I think she actually has a nice voice, contrary to what she said, but I don't tell her, so I don't interrupt her). Surely, I will listen to it later to hon- our this moment.

I'm going through an intensely emotional moment right now with a lot of learning and a lot of transformation. A moment of radical listening to myself derived from things I am discovering about my emotional relationships and transformation. Yesterday, for exam- ple, this is important to tell you. Yesterday, I went out to see a friend because I'm in this emotional place where I go very low. I go big low, and then I bounce back. I hadn't been on the subway for about three months, and yesterday, I went to see my friend, and I took my headphones to the song that I played over and over again on the subway be- cause I couldn't go to Spotify only Youtube is *Lalala I love* you by the Rondells. Yes, I like those songs that move me a lot. I don't know how to explain that I like it so much that the rhythm awakens my emotions with this song. I think a lot about my partner, how we have been, how we have grown, and the vulnerability that being trans implies for me and having a partner for the first time. He is my first partner in 32 years; this is linked to what you asked me because he is the first partner I have; imagine the magnitude. So, of course, all the songs we listen to at parties have meaning for me. And a very dense one. El baile y el salón by Café Tacvba is a song we dance to. He dedicated a song to me that I shed tears when I listened to and heard at some moments during the pan- demic: *Quisiera ser alcohol* by Caifanes. I think that during the pandemic, I was on Spo- tify a lot because a friend shared his Spotify with me, and when he was listening, I couldn't listen and vice versa. I often listened to Hector Lavoe (the song) *Periódico de Ayer*. He (the artist) accompanied me a lot.

I also have a personal ritual that I can share with you without a problem. I smoke a cig- arette at night before sleep, and sometimes I play *Desierto* by Talisto. I think that song moves me something; I discovered it during the pandemic. And I used to play a lot when I was smoking my cigarette at night Everybody *Has to Learn* by Beck. That song moves me like you have no idea. We all have something to learn; what it means is very deep. That song has accompanied me a lot during the pandemic. I have moments when I listen to songs that can make me go up and down very hard.

And look...we are talking now; I'm just lying in bed here at your house. And a marimba has just come and is playing ('turns on the video we were on audio only). Let's see what song it plays. Because, of course, there has been a huge movement of musicians coming to homes to play, this is an example. It's '*Llorona'*. She sings. Did you hear?

I smile and say yes, and I realise it has been a long time since I haven't heard marimba live. It is a traditional instrument you can hear almost everywhere in Chiapas, where I am from. I take this as a gift and a sign and allow myself to enjoy it briefly before re- turning to the interview.

If I play a song that goes through my emotions but in a melancholier vein, it is because I want to inhabit that space, shed tears, and enter into a catharsis with the song, such as Beck's. *Bonsenso* by Tim Maya gives me a lift and helps me to get out of that sadness and go up, and the cumbias by Pintura Roja are like the mantras that give me a lift.

Each song has its emotional nuance, its affective nuance and its nuance of memory of what resonates and reminds me. If you play those songs (the ones mentioned during the interview), I will remember many things from before and during the quarantine. Let's see what songs will make me remember the quarantine afterwards.

These are songs that, when I press play, take me back to experiences that I have had with my partner and friends and parties where people danced on the beach. I try to find songs that remind me of the sea or the beach because I feel connected to the sea and the water. All of these

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songs I just shared with you are songs that, when played, directly touch my emotions related to tenderness to experiences of something that moved me. When I even shed tears, it is complex because maybe for other people, it triggers other things, joy, a party or... but for me, they trigger a lot of tenderness rooted in those experiences. Playing these songs takes me back to a specific moment in my past, you know, those moments in my life when there was no pandemic. Where I could express my affections publicly without confinement

What song would you play right now for everyone to listen to?

A mi manera (My way), the Rafael version. In its chorus, it says, "*maybe I cried or maybe I laughed, now I know that I was happy that I did cry... in my own way*" because I be- lieve that this pandemic has come to transform all of us and take out all of our inner demons. What this pandemic does is make you find yourself, make you find those who are close to you, alone. But now that the world is beginning to wake up little by little, we realise the great strength we have to face it.

It's just like that, in my way. I lived that pandemic in my own way as I could, with what I could and had. And I am alive, I am alive, and I can say that I survived this historical moment in my own way. Because when the song starts, I don't know if you remember, it says the end is near. *Tal vez viví un amor que, para mí, fuera importante* (Maybe I lived a loved that for me was important). So, it is related to many resiliences that we were embodying during this pandemic.

Just like the topic of making a playlist is very interesting to me. What triggers me is pre- cisely finding myself on another level. Now, from the perspective of music. Because if you play those songs, we explore today, we call together. For me, it is as if I am frag- mented. I feel like I'm fragmenting. Those songs... because they are from different mo- ments in my life and my history, they mark different affections and emotions, and that is what is beautiful too, calling multiple people with those songs.

It's not just you; it's everyone around you. They are songs that have crossed my body and my affections, and I have chosen them for a reason. And they accompanied me.

They are songs that will not only go through the living memory of a specific situation but also of the pandemic.

How do you consider the pandemic experience?

Well, it's a strong question because, for me, at the beginning, the pandemic was a crisis, a physical breakdown because it just came to destroy all my structures. I am used to do- ing public work; I am used to always looking for corners outside in the squares, in the prisons, on the sidewalks, in the schools where I can get closer to people and do peda- gogy because pedagogy for me is an action of daily life, well, yes, it was intense, be- cause we had to have forced confinement. And that confinement became complex be- cause that is what I'm telling you: confinement makes us meet our demons. It makes us realise that we are people, and I say this not only for myself but for other friends who surely share that we are very impatient people. This pandemic came to confront us with patience; it stripped us of our stressed lives. There is nowhere to go; there is nothing to do. And that made us realise how the city has taken away our patience. It confronts us on a level to realise that we are human beings doing things non-stop. I confront us with how we depend on the outside. Because most of us in Mexico have to work outside. We can't be at home. This thing at home was only on Sundays. It was hard for me to realise that I am an impatient person and that I still persevered at the end of all this. The voice, for example, now is a political action of transformation. It's what allows us to be close. Just as the virus crossed all the borders of the world.

Appendix 5. Interview 2.

Isa's Interview

Starting with David Bowie's Black Start. There are two things: I always miss David Bowie since the day he died. I always felt him as a somewhat paternal figure. I don't know why; it's my own delusion (she smiles when saying this). I always felt him as a paternal figure, so when he died... I had a 10-year-old son. He was a little younger than he is now, and he saw me cry. And it surprised him a lot, and now he remembers very clearly that I was crying because of someone who was not my family. At that moment, my son realised the importance he had to me and now it is a bizarre thing because now the one playing Black Star is my son more than me, she laughs. Together, we watched the album videos, for example, the one about Lazarus, and he told me: "that's where he's saying goodbye" and he plays them all the time and sings them, too. For me, now it's a little strange because the journey was: I love David Bowie, he died, I miss him, and now it's as if it were some- thing happy because I can share it with my son. Also, children put things up a thousand times, and lately I've heard this song pfff (She makes an expression, meaning she has heard it a thousand times. It's incredible because Black Start is (an album) that is very difficult to get tired of listening to because it has many symphonic variations. It is an incredible thing.

I find music very interesting: how it mutates and goes through emotional and mental territories where you can go away. It doesn't matter; the same song can mean many things in different periods of your life. And I am very happy to have been able to over- come this excruciating death; it always reminds me of my father's death (Black Star). Now, I have it attached to death, and now I have it attached to my son, and I love that.

Me: Okay, it's maybe like you re-signified it?

Isa: Exactly. In reality, I stopped caring about the other layers. This is very important. It speaks to me about DB's ability to connect in many

ways. The song connected with my son and made me connect with my son, too.

Then I have the Police. About twelve years ago, two years before my son was born, I was editor of the magazine Vuelos by Mexicana (a Mexican airline). I went on some incredible trips that I didn't pay for. And I went on a trip with a photographer who is my friend, and we wrote and shot many journal articles in Spain; we went to the south of Spain, and I wanted to go to Barcelona and Girona. We went north, and I wanted to go south. It turned out that I had a car, and the photographer had to leave for another place. So, he told me to go by car from Santander all the way to Girona, he told me that it was about 8 hours. I had a rented car, which ended up being 15 or 16 hours.

I was driving alone, and the only thing he left me was A CD of The Police's greatest hits. To me, The Police...this is another song that has had many layers. I've always liked them, and I love them. I liked them as a child, a lot as a child, when I was very little. And then I stopped listening to them for a long time, and I picked it up again at that moment when there was only one CD of the greatest hits that was repeating and repeat- ing. (During the trip) I was falling asleep, I was alone so for me... for me "So lonely" rep- resents how I managed to become an adult, you know, because when you are driving, you have to overcome many things that are like remnants of childhood. If you want to sleep, you fall asleep, I want to leave, you just leave. If you want to cry, you just cry. So when you are alone in another country and you have to get there because you have to get there, no matter what. That is "So lonely", for me (she laughs when saying this). So, I don't know why, but surely something happened in my head that now in quarantine, I decided that I wanted to listen to the Police a lot, like during that time. Maybe it was a mental path that I wanted to follow, like... **I'm thinking about it now that I'm telling you,** but it probably has to do with self-control. (Here, she starts to speak as if she is speaking to herself) Control *yourself. This is going to pass. You're going to get there, but we're still on the way*. If there is just this crappy CD, then fuck it.

Quarantine is kind of like that in our case; some people don't take it so seriously. I have asthma, I am a bit overweight and many more things that make me prone to die easily, no? (talking about getting infected). And, well, I have a son, and I definitely don't want to leave him. So, I have been taking great care of myself, and we have gone out very little. For us, the quarantine of being at home... we had to learn to divide our spaces. We are three, so learn to endure the most days and enjoy the good days. So maybe that's why I'm getting The Police now back to my life, probably because of that feeling that The Police are with me in those moments where you have to push forward (hay que bancarsela, in Argentinian slang), s the Argentines say.

Either you go through it, or you go through it. There is no other way in this one. You just have to wait.

Me: Yeah, it totally is a matter of patience Ira: Yes, patience. A matter of patience

She starts with the next song. Peter Gabriel... I loved him when I was 18. I liked him a lot for a long time. I was a film critic for Chilango magazine (Mexican Magazine), so cinema is very important to me. This is a soundtrack for a movie called The Last Tempta- tion of Christ by Scorsese. This is the moment when Christ enters Nazareth. When he has already retreated, and then he returns to Nazareth and becomes quite the preacher (she says this with emphasis). I'm not Christian or Catholic or anything. I don't have a religion (she laughs saying this) but that moment always makes me very emotional, mainly because of the song. So the other thing that happened during Covid was that I started run- ning. I wanted to not be in so bad shape if it got me. Not to be so fat, so inactive, to get out a little, so I started running, and the only song that I feel this need to keep on going, to keep pushing through is this song. So, I put it in on a playlist I made about running and it is this song with which... I see that Christ, despite the fact that they are going to kill him, despite everything, enters Nazareth with a lot of brio, no? She laughs when telling me this. The one that follows is also similar. I was still in my plan to keep on run- ning; **it's by the Stones Roses, "I am the**

resurrection". The truth is that this period of covid has a lot to do with resistance because we have been here for a year and a bit, and we have gone through many stages now. We go from everything is going to be okay; nothing is fine. I'm fine. I'm sick and tired, I can't take it anymore and... It helped me a lot (this song) with the death of my parents because it was a song that always...always...my parents died in an accident when I was 15 years old. So, I am...this was a song that allowed me to be angry, too, aha. At that moment, the pain can be many things, but it is never a backward pain; sometimes, it is anger. It's a way of being kind of proud of the anger that makes you keep on going every day. Then, of course, with the covid, there were days that I said, *my God, what are we going to do?* days of great anguish... *I'm going to die, I'm going to die for sure tomorrow*, you know? There's a lot of anguish. This is the song that calms my anguish, is a song that is not like *calm down* is more like *get angry*, she laughs saying this.

Me: like cathartic?
Isa: Yes, it is cathartic. Is a long, cathartic song.

"Barefoot in the park", I discovered this song (during the pandemic), I can't tell you much more (about the song) more than Rosalia's voice seems spectacular to me, and it is a very longing song about two guys who see each other in a park and who are barefoot and both voices... I really like James Blake and I discovered Rosalia from this song. And well, I listened to it, and I listened to it, and I can't take it away. I don't know. **This is one of those things I can't intellectualise.** I can't say because I can't remove it; it's just Ros- alia's voice.

Me: Was it a quarantine discovery?

Yes, it is. Maybe that's it; I put it here (playlist) because I have heard it a lot in this peri- od, but it is because perhaps I have discovered new music. I guess I hear a lot of songs like *So Lonely* and very old things. I didn't put them here, but I've listened to a lot of electronic music.

Me: Have you always listened to electronic music?

Isa: No, now I'm listening to electronic music a little because... the music that I general- ly listen to... I am a translator too; when I'm on the computer, I need to listen to myself, so I can't play music because it draws my attention a lot, and I have to be singing it or listening and then I say *here comes this moment* that I like a lot. I get distracted, I can't write with music. Now I discovered that to work or translate electronic music is the best to work with, it is like it puts you in a trance, no.

Then they *subterranean homesick alien*. That song is one of the first things I shared with my husband from the *Okay Computer*. And the truth is that there are also very low days in the pandemic. There are days when you are in a bad mood because there is nowhere for this to end; people are starting to die, you know?

And the place where I feel bad the best is in the Okay Computer (she laughs). I mean, with Radiohead, you can feel bad; well, with Radiohead, I sometimes feel very bad, and the truth is it's a necessity. I suppose there is a psychological explanation, **but there is a need to resort to where you can comfortably feel bad**. There are no regrets, or for me, just what I feel is the hardness of the world. *Okay Computer* has to do with the hard- ness of reality because it is a form... it is an escape from the world, it is a sci-fi escape from the world, and what happens with science fiction and music and literature is that... unfortunately,, the escape lasts only until you realise that it is a metaphor of re- ality, right? and for me, the metaphor of reality is very clearly present and also it seems to me clearer even through science fiction, I don't know why.

This song has something to do with it. Yes, because *homesick*, well, it is homesick; it is clearly a song for longing. I think this song is a longing for something that is now impos- sible to recover, which is normality. Of this thing we had before. This thing that no longer exists and will never exist again. Because we return, however, we return, right? Let's say that this is going to be with us for a long time and that... (she pauses and re- flects), I started to think a lot that, if you think about it, reality always goes in a spiral, right? I mean, it bends around in the same place, but it's

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already on another level, right? She makes a sign with her hands showing the spiral, and then like in this spiral loop, our reality is going to look a little like what it was before, but never again, never again will it be the same. There are going to be many people missing, there are going to be many people who left their jobs and now are doing something else. The world changed a lot; it's not like... maybe like, yes, homesick, but not about the place, but about that moment. She laughs when saying this, where we could see each other, no? she laughs. Yes, that moment where we could see each other, longing for where we could see each other. What covid did a lot from my point of view; obviously, it's not

the **same for everyone, is that we realised that we are all connected** and on the other hand... on the other hand, we also realised that everyone understands how to take care of themselves in their own way. Then we were also separated. I mean, we were separat- ed a lot physically, but also in terms of how little by little I realised that you take care of yourself, but I take care of myself in a different way. It's been tremendous, I had nev- er felt that separation before.

And well, I have liked Suede since the nineties, but what happened with the album *Night Thoughts,* the pandemic also made me have more time to listen to complete albums, which was something that, like everyone else, I had stopped doing. I started listening to the albums in full, and I realised that I hadn't listened to them well and also, when I started running, I realised that I listened to audiobooks when I went to la Roma (a neighbourhood in Mexico City) and to times back about an hour from Roma to here. I live in Tasqueńa (a neighbourhood a bit far from Roma), and then I worked in a small office that we rented among several people. Obviously, during covid we stopped renting it, and what happened is that I had an hour of traffic I was very happy because being a mom is... / she makes childish voices/ *Mom hey mom,* and really, sitting down to read is she laughs a lot, going to the bathroom is... she laughs again if you are taking a bath, if you're going to the bathroom, they just open the door. So I was very happy because I spent an hour listening to something, and I was concentrating for me it was like I was knitting and listening to something. Turns out that in the pandemic, the

first thing I missed was my reading of the trips because there were no longer trips to have. Then what I learned is that I could do it with audiobooks to walk my dog. Now, what I do... is I realised that I need this thing that gives you an album to pay total attention. Pay at- tention to the album and how it was conceived. I found two autobiography books by the Suede singer Bret Anderson. For me, there was a period about three months ago when everything was about reading the book and listening to his records, and it was the possi- bility that covid gave me time to do something that I hadn't given time to in a long time. 'First, I lost it (the capacity of having time to pay attention to something), and now I re-covered it with an effort. What happens is that now you have to make an effort. Before, it was like, well, here's the traffic... what's happening with the covid, I think, or the pandemic or this thing, our lockdown, I don't know what to call our confinement... it's that now everything costs a lot more work. Much more work, but it has to do with what you decide to do, not with how life pushed you, and this moment doesn't push you at all. And then you have to make decisions to return to your tastes to what you are looking for in life, and I imagine there are people who don't even know, right?

I am very lucky because I do know that I have passions that overwhelm me. Let's say I have passions that fill me, but I do know many people without passions who feel very lost, no? Then I think what happens is that you feel lost. It is that you let life push you, and the lockdown doesn't push you to anything, she laughs. So, this is my Suede period again.

And the last two (songs), I think, are my favourites. *Burn My Shadow* is an incredible song; the first time I heard it, I also remember it very well. I saw it with its video. think the video director is... I don't remember who directed it. A famous filmmaker did it, and those are videos of skateboarders falling, right? I don't know if it's Michelle Gondry; the video and the song are spectacularly beautiful. One day, I don't know what happened, maybe in this thing of paying more attention to it, it's just that one day I realised, maybe... I realised that in my mind it was a

love song, she laughs, and it probably isn't, but I realised that for me that song was a love song.

That kind of love, as if of that love that consumes you or is unrequited. Not of heartbreak or despair. One day, I was listening to it and thought, *My God, this song is a love song*. That's what lockdown did for me, I actually reconnected with myself. It happens that I was tremendously disconnected from myself, or I was for a long time. I was trying to see where my career was going. I was there for a long time before the covid, let's say I had a bit of collaboration for magazines and things like that, and suddenly, a little before the covid out of pure chance, I started teaching Spanish classes to foreigners, and for that, I rented the little room there in la Roma, so it was very good for me because the foreigners were in la Roma a lot and they came and I taught them and so on. There was a collapse of the Mexican publishing system, so they started to reduce my money, my friends who were editors fired them, and many things happened. I stopped getting collaborations, and what started to happen is that I became teaching Spanish full time. During covid, I sit here every day and give classes and laugh. The classes com- pletely saved me. And then this question of where my career is going and blablabla. It became something else; I think I want to study for a doctorate degree. When this is over, I think I want to study for a doctorate. I think I want to go, one year somewhere, I think... I would have wanted to do the creative writing master's degree, but honestly, it was going to be a very complicated thing because there aren't that many scholarships for creative writing.

And then what happened is that with the covid, I lost some friends, which was very painful. It's not that I lost them, but I don't know if I'll get them back when this is over because we stopped seeing each other. Some of them just don't want to keep talking on zoom. Some just don't talk to me much anymore; I don't know what happened. I'm going to understand everything when this is over, and we meet again. But I guess many people lost friends. I shouldn't be the only one. It's like a readjustment, right? I have two friends: one friend who is a poet and another friend who is a comic artist. I was able to do it, maybe because

the old ones left and made room for new ones. Especially with women, which is always complicated

... For me, it is *Here comes the flood*. It is absolutely full of my images. Also, for me, it talks about the end of the world. This song...Peter Gabriel wrote from a dream of the end of the world where he imagined what would come like a flood. That the world was going to flood, also symbolically of everyone's emotional feelings.

Me: Is there an order on the playlist?

Isa: The truth is, they do have an order; that's why I put *Here comes the flood* at the end because that's what I felt like the end was my future. If you pay attention, the low- est point (on the playlist) is Subterranean, that's the lowest point. It's like the song is the one you use to go to the bathroom during a concert. And then the mood starts going up a little.

Me: Any song that you consider a landmark?
Isa: oh, of course, yes, I remember s*ubterranean*. I remember very well it was in the house of the man who is now my husband, and he put it in the living room of his house when he still lived with his parents, and he handed me the album, and I told him is that Radiohead? what is that? and then he gave it to me. I remember the day of DB's death my husband came up to me and told me, he grabbed me and I was sitting on the edge of the bed and he told me *I.'ll leave you for a little while I'll go with the kid*. I cried a lot. I also think that what is beautiful about music is that really what I know... without music... everyone here... what covid taught us is that we are together in this. Everyone is in this together. I really believe it showed us that what someone does can affect the entire world. What this man did has affected everyone. Our existence always affects more people.

I believe that we and the Portuguese understand this dwelling in sadness, no? She laughs a bit. There is a little place where we Mexicans know how to be sad but not go all the way there. I think these are the rancheras. *Tristear*. We will be sad-happy together. We are celebrating and being sad together. Look at the word, we even have a verb. We are

sad we are going to be sad togeth**er**. Like Blackstar, and other things that happened when David Bowie died, I had a reunion to listen to the album entirely. Tristeamos for David Bowie (We gathered to be sad for David Bowie). It's so cool that it is a verb. We are feeling down, and there is this little space where you can be in sadness, but not so much.

Appendix 6. Chapter 4 (Findings) Playlist

The playlist compiled in Chapter 4, Findings with songs of the participants and mine.

1. 'Night'sFalling'byAndrewBird
2. 'ComeDown(COLORSStudioversion)'byJoesef(Lala'sPlaylist)
3. 'One'byKellyLeeOwens(Mario'sPlaylist)
4. 'CyclingTrivialities'byJoséGonzaléz(Eve'sPlaylist)
5. 'KeepGoing'byThisIsTheKit(Valeria'sPlaylist)
6. 'Rezoporvos(MTVUnpluggedversion)'byCharlyGarcia(Andrea'sPlaylist)
7. PinkRabbits'byTheNational(Valeria'sPlaylist)
8. 'HoldOn'byAlabamaShakes(Samuel'sPlaylist)
9. 'One'byHarryNelson(Hector'sPlaylist)
10. 'Que corran' by Los Caligaris (Carlos's Playlist)
11. 'Horrible things' by Future Wife (Valeria's Reflection)
12. 'Fuck You' by Lilly Allen (Valeria's Playlist)
13. 'TRUMPETS' by _BY.ALEXANDER (Ramiro's Playlist)
14. 'Blue Rose' by Amen Dune (Eve's Playlist)
15. 'Show me how to live' by Audioslave (Emilio's Playlist)
16. 'Every Day is a Miracle' by David Byrne (Valentina's Playlist)
17. 'Man is Not a Bird' by Broadcast (Marios Playlist)
18. 'Dorothy' by Polo and Pan Fabia's Playlist)
19. 'Azotea' by Luisa Almaguer (Valeria's Playlist)
20. 'Kalasnjikov' by Goran Bregović
21. 'Fear Not for Men' by Fela Kuti (Gabriel's Playlist)
22. 'Wolf Totem' by The Hu (Carlos's Playlist)
23. 'Rid of Me' by Pj Harvey (Hector's Playlist)
24. 'Immigrants (we get the job done)' by Residente, Riz Ahmed, Snow The Product (part

of the Hamilton Mixtape) (Valeria's Playlist)
25. 'Nos deseo' by Tremenda Jauría and Kumbia Queers (Nere's Playlist)
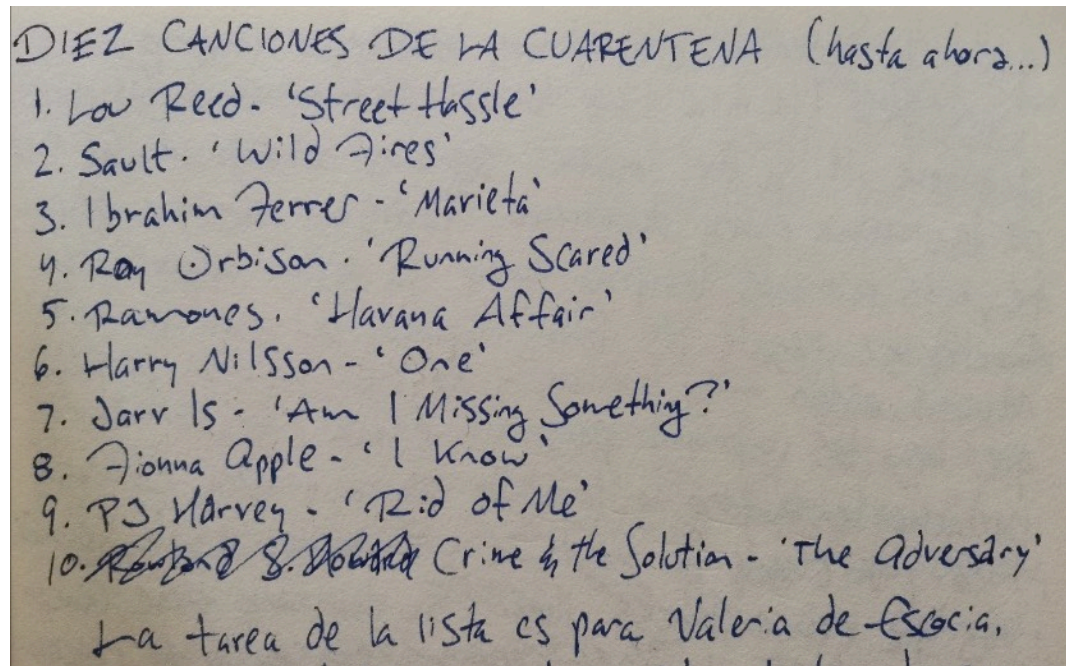26. 'La Barca' by Los Tres Caballeros (Ari's Playlist)

27. 'Querida' by Juan Gabriel (Ramiro's Playlist)

28. 'Playa Girón' by Silvio Rodriguez (Mauro's Playlist)

29. 'Sky Full of Stars' by Coldplay (Carlos' Playlist)

30. 'Solamente una vez' by Pedro Infante (Gabriel's Playlist)

31. 'Eres' by Cafe Tacuva (Valentina's Playlist)

32. 'Marieta' by Ibrahim Ferrer (Hector's Playlist)

33. 'Strawberry Fields Forever' by The Beatles (Rafael's Playlist)

34. 'Nostalgia' by Ulver (Mauro's Playlist)

35. 'Oom Sha La La' by Haley Heynderickx (Dane's Playlist) 36. 'Las tumbas' by Ismael Rivera (Valeria's Playlist)

37. 'Monotonia' by The Growlers (Ari's Playlist)

38. 'La Bamba' by Los Lobos (Rafa's Playlist)

39. 'Nobody' by Mitski (Mario's Playlist)

40. 'White Room' by Cream (Samuel's Playlist)

41. 'Subterranean Homesick Alien' by Radiohead (Isa's Playlist) 42. 'A Comma' by Serpentwithteeth (Valeria's Playlist)

43. 'Clase M' by Niña Tormenta (Mar's Playlist)

Appendix 7. Hector's Playlist

"Diez canciones de la cuarentena (hasta ahora...)" (Ten songs of the quarantine (so far...)"

DIEZ CANCIONES DE LA CUARENTENA (hasta ahora...)
1. Lou Reed - 'Street Hassle'
2. Sault - 'Wild Fires'
3. Ibrahim Ferrer - 'Marieta'
4. Roy Orbison - 'Running Scared'
5. Ramones - 'Havana Affair'
6. Harry Nilsson - 'One'
7. Jarv Is - 'Am I Missing Something?'
8. Fionna Apple - 'I Know'
9. PJ Harvey - 'Rid of Me'
10. ~~Robert S. Howard~~ Crime & the Solution - 'The Adversary'

La tarea de la lista es para Valeria de Escocia,

Appendix 8. My Lockdown Playlist

The playlist I made day before we started the lockdown in Scotland

The Last Night on Earth

- ◦ Until Tomorrow Then - Ed Harcourt

- ◦ We Should Be Holding Hands- Blonde Redhead

- ◦ In Our Bedroom After the War- Stars

- ◦ Dance me to the End of Love- Leonard Cohen

- ◦ It's Oh So Quiet- Björk

- ◦ He's Got the Whole World in His Hands- Nina Simone

- ◦ Ballad of Human kindness- The Dears

- ◦ Noah's Ark- CocoRosie

- ◦ La Noche Total - Belafonte

- ◦ El Baile y el Salon- Café Tacvba

- ◦ Lazarus - David Bowie

- ◦ We Will Always Love You - The Avalanches, Blood Orange

- ◦ Once a Day - Mac Miller

- ◦ Firewood - Regina Spektor

- ◦ Last Good Day of the Year-Cousteau

- ◦ I think I'm Paranoid- Garbage

- ◦ Float On- Modest Mouse

- We Just Won't Be Defeated-The Go! Team

- Pero Qué Necesidad- Juan Gabriel

- Lived and Died Alone-Shamir

- Be There- UNKLE, Ian Brown

- Conclusion- Future Wife, Colin Stetson

- Protection- Massive Attack, Tracey Thorn

- Solita - Kali Uchis

- Hold it Together- The Marías

- Si Te Mueres Mañana- Kanaku y el Tigre y LosPetitFellas

- Let Forever Be- The Chemical Brothers

- It's All Over Now, Baby Blue- Them, Van Morrison

- Me in 20 Years- Moses Sumney

- Inadvertida- The Chamanas

- This Mess We're In- PJ Harvey, Tom Yorke

- El Niagara en Bicicleta- Juan Luis Guerra 4.40

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