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One of the main reasons people engage with music is to experience emotions (Juslin & Sloboda, 2010). While most of these experiences are related to excitement and happiness (Wells & Hakanen, 1991), some emotions are notoriously difficult to characterise, such as music-induced sadness. Emotions induced by sad music are a popular topic in the area of music and emotion research due to their paradoxical nature: when hearing sad music, instead of experiencing negative feelings that the music is portraying, many people seem to enjoy themselves and seek out the kinds of emotional experiences that they tend to avoid in real life (e.g., Vuoskoski et al., 2012; Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014; Garrido & Schubert, 2011, 2015).

This *paradox of tragedy* appears to be a rather mysterious phenomenon since, in the context of music, sadness is often related to highly pleasurable experiences (e.g., Huron, 2011; Trimble, 2012), or unpleasant emotions are intertwined with pleasure: listening to sad-sounding music can induce feelings of vulnerability and/or evoke painful memories from the past, but also provide solace. Thus, people often report that they prefer to listen to sad music when they are alone, or when feeling lonely (Peltola & Eerola, 2016; Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014; Van den Tol & Edwards, 2013).

Listeners' emotional experiences relating to sad music are usually investigated via self-report instruments, surveys, and individual interviews. However, since the previous studies have only concentrated on individuals, the *intersubjective* dimension of the musical experience has often been neglected. This has occurred despite the wide consensus in affective sciences that emotional experiences are

learned in social contexts shared with others (e.g., Salovey, 2003). Although the number of studies focusing on social aspects of music listening is small, the topic is not completely unexplored. There have been empirical attempts to bring the social context into research on music and emotions (e.g., Egermann et al., 2011; Juslin et al., 2008). Based on these observations, the emotional experiences of listening to music with others are different from those of listening in solitude. Egermann et al. (2011) suggested that the social situation may lead to either increased or decreased arousal during music listening depending on the *social appraisal* (people observe their own and others' reactions) and *social facilitation* (people get distracted by others, for example, because of the fear of being evaluated by them). In their study, they found that listening to music alone was more arousing than listening in a group. On the other hand, music can be effective in encouraging a sense of belonging to a social group (Hargreaves & North, 1999), and music listening is also used in mediating social action and experiences as it shapes socially shared values and constructions – such as emotions (DeNora, 2000, 2003). However, our understanding of what these emotions actually are and how they are experienced in the dynamic process of interaction has still remained rather narrow.

I argue that emotions should not be considered as purely biological entities, or individual experiences, but that they have strong intersubjective and cultural qualities. Cultural differences in how and what emotions are associated with music have been previously investigated (e.g., Hakanen, 1995; Hakanen, Ying, & Wells, 1999) but I suggest that the intersubjective aspects of *both* emotions *and* music listening need to be included in the investigation, if musical emotions are

to be more comprehensively understood. This is due to the fact that both experience of emotion and expression of emotion are processes that are shaped by an interactional context (e.g., Salovey, 2003; Sorjonen & Peräkylä, 2012). Also, music does not exist in a vacuum, but is rather a cultural, communicative act that takes place between the composer, the performer, and the listener(s), and always exists as a sonic, lived-through experience. According to some theories, the whole evolutionary origin of music could be inherently social; music might have developed as a tool for social bonding and group cohesion (e.g., Kirscher & Tomasello, 2010). Furthermore, human consciousness and cognition are inherently intersubjective, as they are formed via a dynamic interrelationship between oneself and others, and actively integrate external cultural-technological resources, such as media, and other people (Sutton, 2006; Sutton et al., 2010; Thompson, 2001).

This study investigates how these intersubjective aspects of music listening contribute to the emotional experiences evoked by music. By observing how these experiences are discussed and shared within a group of listeners, I aim to provide new insights into the topic of paradoxical sadness, and shed some light on the socio-culturally shared contents of these experiences. Sad music was chosen as the special musical context because of its paradoxical pleasurable qualities, and because it is often associated with solitude. The research questions of the present study are:

1. How do people discuss their experiences of listening to nominally sad music with others who listen to the same piece of music?

2. How are the experienced emotions expressed verbally and non-verbally in a social interaction?

In order to tap into shared emotional experiences, group discussions about experiences evoked by sad music were facilitated.

Theoretical framework

One of the basic assumptions of this study is that all human experiences take place simultaneously on several levels; every experience involves – at the very least – four such levels: the level of events, the socially shared level of valuing the experiences, the bodily or material level, and the discursive level of narration (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992; Ramazanoglu & Holland, 1999). Cultural and social aspects have an effect on these experiences. In the case of emotional experiences, there is variation in the degree to which people from different cultures experience negative versus positive emotions, for example (Heine, 2008; Miyamoto & Ma, 2011). One possible explanation for this variation is the *conceptualisation* of these experiences.

In this study, emotions are considered as shared *acts of conceptualisation*. This concept refers to processes where thoughts, bodily feelings, and action tendencies are associated with interaction with the world and categorised as a certain emotion without much conscious effort (Barrett, 2006). This conceptualisation is dependent on language, and, as well as being an act of an

individual, there is a strong intersubjective quality within the process as the proper lexicon for inner affective states is learned through one's interaction with her surrounding environment (Wierzbicka, 1999; Kövecses, 2000). Furthermore, although emotions are biologically constrained, they are situated in social contexts and shaped by social interaction that takes place within a (sub-)culture (Abu-Lughod & Lutz, 1990; Nussbaum, 2001; Mesquita & Boiger, 2014).

Method

Focus group interview

Group interview methods have often been used to collect qualitative data on a particular situation experienced by a group of individuals. In this study, the motivation for utilising group rather than individual interviews was based on the assumption that dynamic encounters among group members provide greater perspective on the social aspects of music listening. The idea of a focus group is that the group processes help people to explore their own points of view (Liamputtong, 2011; Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). Thus, the comments made by other group members provide opportunities for comparing one's own experience with that of others, eventually helping to find a mutually shared vocabulary for expressing the lived experience. A focus group interview makes it possible for researchers to observe this everyday process and, thus, obtain new information about such social aspects.

Participants and their self-selected music examples

Informants were recruited from a course on methods for studying listening experience in the University of Jyväskylä's music department. In addition, an email invitation was distributed to mailing lists of student organisations. Since the recommendations concerning the size of the groups are rather loose – from 4 to 12 participants depending on the aim of the study (Krueger, 1994) – different group compositions were tested. From among the volunteers, the interviewer formed three groups. The first group (G1) consisted of two female ("Satu"[1] and "Miina") and two male ("Ossi" and "Petteri") students of musicology. In the second group (G2), there were three female ("Mirka", "Laura", and "Jenni") and two male ("Mikael" and "Sami") students of musicology. These students were already familiar with each other, since all of them attended to the same course. It was assumed that the informants' musical background might affect the way they shared and discussed their experiences as the vocabulary and the ways of listening of musicology students might be more granular compared to non-music students. Therefore, the third group (G3) consisted of three female students ("Kerttu", "Anna", and "Taru") from departments other than the music department.

Since self-selected music is known to be the most effective to produce emotional responses (cf. Blood & Zatorre, 2001), all informants were asked to select a piece of music that they considered to be sad. There were no specified selection criteria for the music; thus, the variety of music samples was substantial, ranging from classical orchestral music to Finnish rock. There were five instrumental

[1] All of the informants' identities were hidden by giving them fake names.

tracks and seven tracks featuring vocals (three sung in Finnish and four in English)[2]. The informants were asked to listen to their selected piece of music several times beforehand and, on each occasion, to focus on their emotional experience. This was intended to help the informants discuss their emotional experience with others during the interviews.

Interviews

The interviews were carried out in Finnish, as both the informants and the interviewer were native Finnish speakers. All of the interviews took place in a seminar room at the University of Jyväskylä. During the interview session, each song provided by the members of the group was played twice. Each track was played without any prior communication of the content or the person who selected it. There was an open discussion about the informants' experiences after the first and second listening of each song. The person who had selected the music only participated in the discussion after the second listening. This prevented their familiarity with the music from unduly influencing the experiences of others. The informants were instructed to listen, and describe their experiences after each round without any restrictions. The musicology students were told that the purpose of the discussion was to share subjective experience rather than to analyse the music.

The discussion groups were primarily self-organised during the interviews. The interviewer did not participate in the discussion, except when asking clarifying

[2] All of the music tracks used in this study are listed in Appendix 1.

questions or giving the occasional prompt. Since the aim was to understand the participants' ways of sharing meanings and interpretations, they were encouraged to talk to each other instead of answering the moderators' questions (Liamputtong, 2011; Steward & Shamdasani, 2015).

Each interview lasted for approximately two hours. All interviews were video-recorded and transcribed verbatim. In addition to verbal accounts, the informants' body gestures and non-vocal communication were also marked to the transcription, because non-vocal conduct is often relevant for understanding the affective meaning of verbal expressions in social interaction (e.g., Peräkylä, 2012). These aspects were included to the analysis by re-observing the situation from the video recording whenever they seemed to contribute to the on-going discussion.

Analytic strategy and analysis

The data was analysed using an interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) approach (Smith, 1996; 2004), which is a tool for exploring how individuals make sense of their personal experiences through their own perspective. Although it is inductive, IPA aims to share constructs and concepts with mainstream psychology and, thus, engage in a dialogue with existing research (Howitt, 2010). Besides in investigating personal perceptions and understandings, IPA techniques are useful for identifying shared experiences within groups of participants (Smith, Jarman, & Osborn, 1999).

The analysis followed a typical IPA strategy in which the themes were identified inductively, then ordered in a systematic table of themes based on their importance and occurrence (Howitt, 2010). This resulted in four superordinate themes: (i) describing the emotional experience, (ii) describing the music, (iii) interpreting the music, and (iv) describing autobiographical associations. The last theme was the least important in the discussions, and the autobiographical comments did not trigger further discussion within the groups. The theme has been omitted from the present discussion for the sake of brevity.

Describing the emotional experience

The first theme concerned descriptions of emotional aspects of the experience evoked by music listening. It encompassed sub-themes: (i) emotions represented by music (i.e. "*The feeling in music*"), and (ii) emotions induced by music (i.e. "*The feeling in me*).[3] These themes were thoroughly intertwined in informants' descriptions; the aspects of the experience were often inseparable.

(i) "The feeling in music" - The fundamental assumption in every interview was that each music track played was an example of nominally sad music. All of the informants knew that they were listening to music that was emotionally meaningful to another group member. Typically, the first issue that was brought

[3] The third sub-theme, *Physical reactions*, is not reported here, because these reactions were not socially negotiable and did not trigger the discussions on shared meaning-making processes. It can, however, be obtained from the author on request.

up after the music listening was the emotional content represented by the music, with an emphasis on the conceptualisation of the type of sadness. This kind of classification of sadness with different meanings is context-dependent and tends to affect the overall emotional experience (Peltola & Eerola, 2016). Comparisons between different tracks were somewhat unavoidable. With regard to some tracks, it seemed to be relatively easy for the group to negotiate and agree on the types of emotions conveyed by the music. For instance, Kerttu and Anna discussed Taru's track (E12) after the first listening:

> "Oh my, that was…" (Kerttu)
>
> "Well, there wasn't any hope there!" (Anna)
>
> "No, there surely wasn't. This was sad for real, and very agonising too [*nervously laughing*] [...] It was terrible how…there was so much anxiety and bad feelings […] Maybe it is hopelessness then." (Kerttu)
>
> "And hatred." (Anna)

In these kinds of tracks, the musical cues for negative emotions and the performance were instantly discussed by all group members through descriptions of shared interpretations. During the discussion, Kerttu's and Anna's body language was implying that they both reacted to the music in some affective level, as they were frowning, taking long pauses for looking for the right words, and sighing in between their accounts. There was no need for debate, since everybody in G3 agreed that Taru's track was sad in a scary and agonising way.

Some tracks caused confusion within the groups. Because the default emotion for the musical expression was pre-defined, there was a tendency for informants to

negotiate and find solutions for unclear cues. Petteri's choice of music (E4) in G1 clearly did not meet his group members' standards for *sadness*. The group spent a good deal of time and effort negotiating how the music could express sadness or at least some other negative feelings:

> "Compared to those previous tracks that were melancholic, this was more like… [*laughing*] kind of energetic" (Miina)
>
> [*Satu laughing*]
>
> "For me it's not even in a good-bad axis, but more like…there's an overall electric feeling in the song." (Ossi)
>
> "That's right, if I had to put an emoticon for this music, the neutral smiley [*laughing*] would be the only option" (Satu)
>
> "It's funny…maybe I would categorise it as somehow expressing more negative vibes, but it's not that obvious […] there's only a hue of melancholy, but since it's so energetic, the [sad] feeling is not overflowing." (Ossi)

In general, laughter is often used in problematic interactional contexts (Haakana, 2012). Satu's and Miina's laughter and the nervous smiles they shared suggested that there was some kind of struggle going on in this discussion.

It was generally easy for the person who chose the music to describe the emotional content, because they often had an established interpretation of it. Petteri, who seemed to be slightly embarrassed by his fellow group members' discussion, had to concede and admit that he understood his group's confusion. Nevertheless, he still defended his opinion on the song's emotional expression:

> "I think this is clearly melancholic…okay, I admit that it's not obviously like 'hey, let's swim in the sadness' type of thing, but for me, it's very wistful. But at the same time there's energy. […] Melancholic, yet hopeful. But not happy for sure." (Petteri)

In this case, the social situation and the need to negotiate within the group were clearly evident. Although they did not agree with Petteri on the emotional content of the song, the rest of the group still worked together to solve the "puzzle" at hand. This helped them to gain an insight into a fellow group member's experience. Conversely, the person who selected the music had to accept the critique concerning his conception of sad music and explain his established experience.

(ii) "The feeling in me" - Besides recognising emotional expression, music evoked various emotions in the informants. In the case of self-selected music, they often emphasised that the emotional experience was quite immutable; the feelings induced by the given piece of music were more or less the same every time, regardless of the situation. Even the abnormal interview setting did not bother most participants, who were able to detach themselves from the presence of others by closing their eyes or staring on the floor. These kinds of pleasurable emotions induced by familiar music are often sought out (cf., Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014; Van den Tol & Edwards, 2013), even if the person cannot quite explain the rationale behind their selection. For some participants, though, the interview situation and the presence of the other group members made it difficult for them to have the desired experience. Satu and Laura mentioned that they listened to their own selections in a more analytical fashion than they would in private. They went on to state that this probably had an effect on their emotional reactions during the interview. Jenni described her reaction to a song that she usually only listens to when she is alone (E7):

> "It was very difficult to get in [to the experience]. I was like, 'Why can't I get into this? Why can't I get in?' I felt like telling the others to go away [*laughing*] 'I just want to listen to this from my headphones' [*laughing*] But then on the second round it was easier." (Jenni)

For her, the social facilitation (Egermann et al., 2011) seemed to decrease the emotional arousal during the first round of listening, but during the second round she was able to experience the familiar feelings.

Emotions induced by music that was heard for the first time – as compared to informants' own selected songs – depended on not only the musical preference of the informants, but also their "*horizon of expectations"* (Jauss, 1982; Cook, 2003). This concept illustrates the complex relationship of different kinds of expectations that exists between the piece of art, its creator, and the audience member. In this case, the expectations of the genre, the performer, and the inherent rules of musical expression (Huron, 2006; Juslin and Västfjäll, 2008; Juslin, 2013) were constantly present in the informants' accounts, as they reflected on and negotiated their musical and stylistic expectations of different tracks with each other.

In addition to expectations of musical features, the horizon of expectations included those regarding the emotion sadness. Participants implicitly communicated their expectations of the emotional reaction in their accounts, which suggests that they had existing concepts for both sad music and the emotions it is able to induce in them (cf. Peltola & Eerola, 2016). The

participants' expectations were guided by prior knowledge of the emotional content that all the tracks were supposed to express. Anna did not quite seem to recognise the sadness conveyed by Kerttu's track (E10), thus, her emotional reaction to the music was somewhat unexpected:

> "The arrangement and the melody actually put me in a good mood [...] Maybe it's like you [*to Taru*] said that melancholy may also be a good feeling... [...] I mean, I didn't get the feeling that it would make me feel low...it's pleasant." (Anna)

Her concept of sad music seemed to be related to felt sadness or being in a negative mood, and she reflected this by referring to Taru's earlier concept of melancholy being a positive experience, which Anna seemed to recognise but not necessarily feel herself. Since this music "put her in a good mood" rather than meeting her expectations, Anna's emotional reaction was incongruous with expected sadness that was implicitly present in the social setting. Later, after Kerttu had described her relationship with the song, Anna softened her account by trying to explain herself and negotiate with Kerttu:

> "It's funny how, for you, this is immensely sad while I got these happy feelings... But you know, after hearing this song only twice, it's difficult to concentrate on both the music and the [English] lyrics" (Anna)

Yet again, the awareness of another person's experience made the informant reflect and explain her own experience and negotiate the meaning-making process with the others.

Describing the music

The second theme concerned descriptions of the music that was heard. When participants were asked to describe their emotional experience of music listening, they often ended up describing the musical features instead of the emotions they experienced. This could suggest that people find it difficult to distinguish what they hear and how it makes them feel. In terms of a lived musical experience, perception and feeling are more or less intermingled (Peltola & Saresma, 2014). The theme encompassed two sub-themes: (i) musical features, and (ii) the visual imagery evoked by the music.

(i) Musical features – Describing musical features include the structural aspects of music (such as how the music was arranged, the role of different instruments, which phrases were repeated, and how the lyrics and music fitted together) and the sound of the music. These aspects were typically the second issue discussed, after the emotional label of the music. One might think that, since two of the groups comprised musicology students (many of whom could play some instrument to at least a semi-professional level), informants' musical background would explain this analytical listening style, but even G3, in which the informants were not musically trained, spent a great deal of time discussing structure and other musical features. The main difference between the groups was that the non-musicology students lacked the professional vocabulary used to describe musical features. Also, musicology students often referred to their own music making in the cases of instruments they were familiar with playing. However, the group members in G3 referred to singing or dancing, which – in addition to listening – seemed to them to be familiar ways of engaging with music.

Typically, structural aspects were related to informants' musical expectations – how and why the expectations were confirmed or violated (Juslin & Västfjäll, 2008) – but also with aesthetic judgement and appraisal. The relationship between lyrics and music was frequently discussed within this theme. If there seemed to be any conflicts, the lyrics were brought up. Ossi described his experience of the lyrics and music within his own track:

> "The lyrics are actually quite contradictory, if I may say so. There are some fine metaphors there […] but then again, there are those clumsy metaphors too, so I really don't know how to take this as a whole song" (Ossi)

Ossi discussed his own song in a very critical manner, and even understated both its emotional expression and personal meaning to him. This critical attitude towards one's own track indicates a degree of self-consciousness and social vulnerability to exposing an emotionally meaningful piece of music to others. Based on their nonverbal communication, such as blushing and nervously laughing, discussing their self-selected music seemed to be rather awkward for some participants. This awkwardness may pertain to personal differences and the ways that people are accustomed to talking about their emotions in general. However, there were variations in how different groups put effort into creating a comfortable atmosphere for the discussions and reducing social awkwardness by lifting more serious moments with humorous comments and (fake) laughter (see e.g., Haakana, 2012; Norrick, 1993), or showing support for another's interpretation and experience of their selected piece of music. In G1, where both of the male informants were occasionally giving highly critical comments on the music tracks, the overall awkwardness of the situation seemed to be higher

compared to other groups. Especially in G3, all group members kept negotiating and coordinating their expressive behaviour in order to create mutual positivity, by using both verbal and nonverbal cues, such as smiling, seeking eye contact, and leaning towards the person to whom they were addressing their comments (e.g., Tickle-Degnen & Rosenthal, 1990; Grahe & Bernieri, 1999). Thus, the composition of a social group and the dynamics within it may greatly affect how comfortable people feel about sharing their experiences (Stewart et al., 2007).

Descriptions of what the music sounded like were strongly intertwined with descriptions of musical structures. Metaphorical language was currently needed in negotiating these experiences. Some tracks evoked similar metaphors within the group members. This suggests that people share metaphorical modes of thought (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and use metaphors to help explain experiences of abstract phenomena – such as music or inner feelings – to others (Larson, 2012; Peltola & Saresma, 2014). Ossi and Petteri negotiated the sound of music in Satu's track (E1) by using shared metaphors:

> "It sounded like these tiny drop-like sounds were dripped on top of the ensemble" (Ossi)
>
> "The sound was kind of misty and sad…like one was watching through a window that is soaked wet from rain" (Petteri)
>
> "Yeah, I was thinking that the sound was a bit… what you were trying to describe, like watching through a misty glass" (Ossi)

These descriptions were linked to visual imagery, as the sounds were described using metaphors of concrete objects and/or movement (cf., Johnson & Larson, 2003).

(ii) Visual imagery evoked by music - In addition to describing their experiences through metaphors of concrete objects, informants provided detailed descriptions of the visual imagery evoked by music. This was especially common for the five instrumental pieces, but tracks with vocal performances also evoked visual imagery. Some informants were more disposed to experience visual imagery than others. However, each person's described imagery was shared or at least recognised by another group member, potentially due to the cultural factors that dictate how music and visual imagery are combined in different media (Tagg & Clarida, 2003).

After the initial music listening, some descriptions of visual imagery tended to leave lasting impressions on the other group members. As such, the first description of visual imagery affected participants' lived experiences during the second round. For instance, after hearing Mikael's track (E9), Laura first described a detailed scene set in an airport. However, upon hearing Mirka and Sami discuss their shared visual imagery, Laura's experience changed:

> "I saw myself in an airport waiting for my flight. […] I'm sitting there in a cafeteria, waiting, trying to understand what is happening to me, that I'm turning a new page in my life" (Laura)
>
> " I was thinking about summer rain. I'm sitting somewhere indoors; feeling secure…holding a teacup. It's rainy but nice" (Mirka)
>
> "Yeah, I had pretty similar imagery to Mirka. The atmosphere was a bit melancholic, exactly like…sitting indoors and having this…not quite sad but a nicely melancholic feeling." (Sami)
>
> [*after the second listening*]

> "This time, I could only think about the rainy summer day with the teacup and low weather that you two were describing." (Laura)

Her altered visual imagery is a prime example of the fluctuating nature of a lived experience. It keeps changing and is affected by contextual and extramusical information (Vuoskoski & Eerola, 2013), such as an interpretation provided by others.

Interpreting the music

The third theme overlapped considerably with the previous one. It concerned the informants' interpretations of the meanings of certain musical features or the musical genre. As they described the musical structure, they also explicated cultural meanings inherent in the music. These interpretations were often linked to visual imagery evoked by the music. The theme encompassed two sub-themes of descriptions: (i) cultural connotation(s) for the overall style or genre of the music and (ii) cultural connotation(s) for some musical feature or structure.

(i) Cultural connotation(s) for the style/genre - Different musical genres convey different musical cues for similar emotional expression, such as sadness, (e.g., Saari & Eerola, 2015), and there are sociocultural meanings maintained and conveyed via these musical conventions (see also Hakanen, 1995). Since all the music tracks represented more or less different musical genres, the focus of the discussions varied considerably in accordance with the style of the music. The groups negotiated the cultural meanings of different musical genres. They did so

by comparing the tracks and conceptualising the type of sadness that was represented by each style. Petteri and Ossi described the differences in cultural meanings between Miina's (E3) and Ossi's (E2) tracks:

> "I was thinking that the sadness in this track [E3] was kind of sophisticated…I don't know if it was the violin or what, but…I can't help comparing it to the previous song [E2] that was more like…umm…dirty and…it must be because the instruments were so different, I mean, there were drums and electric guitar, so it was more like…" (Petteri)
>
> "Manly sadness." (Ossi)
>
> "Yeah, it was manly. Sadness of men. [*laughing*] So compared to that, this was sophisticated…Like wearing silk gloves while playing a violin and secretly weeping at the same time" (Petteri)

This negotiation reveals cultural connotations and attitudes towards different styles of music. For these informants, a symphonic orchestral piece with a solo violin sounded sophisticated, while a progressive rock song with drums and electric guitar carried connotations of dirtiness and manliness. "Sadness of men" was represented by this type of music, as opposed to the femininity implied by classical music and violin. Of course, it is possible that the male vocals in E2 affected the interpretation of the whole song. However, the gendered nature of music discourses has been recognised before. There are musical conventions for constructing masculinity and femininity in Western music (McClary, 2002), and cultural attitudes towards musical genres often convey aspects of gender that are learned in childhood (Green, 2002).

Music with obvious cultural connotations evoked identical associations within group members. Laura's selection (E6) was a rather typical funeral march, which

is often used in public funerals for heads of states. Although the informants did not recognise the song, they instantly agreed on the type of sadness and cultural meanings inherent in the piece by completing each other's sentences:

> "I immediately got this feeling of funerals, for some…it sounded like a march." (Mikael)
>
> "Yeah, a real procession of mourners." (Jenni)
>
> "Something very solemn and ceremonial…monumental, kind of like national mourning. Somehow I was thinking about the Soviet Union. [*laughing*] I relate it to war or some big loss" (Mirka)
>
> "I was thinking about…maybe military funerals, or like people have been killed in a tragic way" (Sami)
>
> "There's honour in this…the great leader and how we've lost him and…" (Jenni)
>
> "Or…like, a whole nation…" (Mirka)

In addition to agreeing on the cultural context of the music, the group agreed on the quality of emotion expressed. They did so by comparing this track to the previous ones that they thought sounded more private:

> "Well, it sounded somehow formal. I mean, it wasn't like wallowing in a personal sadness, but there were more people involved…like, grieving together…" (Mirka)
>
> "Yeah, I totally agree, this was more like collective sadness than personal." (Mikael)

Again, the cultural and contextual knowledge seemed to affect how the informants conceptualised the emotional qualities of their experiences (Barrett, 2006).

(ii) Cultural connotations for the musical feature/structure - With regard to certain musical features and structural aspects, the meanings of established cultural connotations were persistently interpreted by the informants. The most

frequently mentioned sign of sadness was, unsurprisingly, a minor mode. In addition to this, other expressive cues were often explicated in interpretations. When interpreting Satu's track (E1) as sad, Petteri described many cultural connotations:

> "First of all, it was in a minor mode, so naturally this made it somewhat wistful. The melody sounded melancholic. And it was slow and, because it was in three, it made me think about…like there was this gloomy waltz going on. At some point, there were these high notes that were distinct from the register of the main melody. I thought they were representing dreams that were out of reach…and the misty main melody was like a protagonist talking by himself […] But then again, as it ended with a major chord, it made me think that his situation is not as hopeless as it seems…like, there's something good there in the middle of all the sadness and misery."

Minor mode, slow tempo, and misty timbre of the melody are nearly textbook examples of expressive musical cues for sadness in Western culture (Eerola, Friberg, & Bresin, 2013). Additionally, the concept of the main melodic line representing the thoughts or emotions of a protagonist or narrator is redolent of Western music traditions (Robinson, 1997). Ending the piece with a Picardy third is a common musical device for conveying hope or happiness (Hatten, 1994). Miina interpreted the Picardy third ending in a very similar way, stating that it made her think that "something happy is happening, or like, a flower is blooming in springtime". Satu, on the other hand, explained that the Picardy third reminded her of a grey sky growing brighter. All in all, the whole group agreed that the musical features of the track created an atmosphere of "soft", "warm", and "comfortable" sadness.

The idea of a protagonist revealing their inner thoughts and feelings was discussed in reference to many other tracks. For instance, in Taru's track (E12), the conflict between the laid-back quality of the music and the morbid, softly sung lyrics was thought to symbolise psychotic jealousy. In this regard, the whistling carried an important meaning. This was interpreted as a cue for easygoingness. In the context of the jealous lyrics, however, the whistling sounded scary to all of the group members:

> "The creepy whistling there in the beginning…you know that nothing good is coming out of this situation." (Kerttu)
>
> "Yeah, the whistling is one of my favourite things in this, because it makes this so twisted…it forces you to listen to it." (Taru)
>
> "Yeah, maybe if you think that he's a bit paranoid, and the thing is in his head, then maybe that pervert whistling just perfectly fits there. Like, he's a bit loony." (Anna)
>
> "I've been thinking that the whistling could be just his imagination, or maybe the other one [in the relationship] is carelessly whistling. And even then it could be just in his head, like he's imagining her meeting somebody else and just being very nonchalant while going there to betray him." (Taru)

The informants, being women, seemed to put themselves into the position of "the other" rather than empathising with the male singer. Their interpretation of the imaginary situation felt threatening and, hence, did not acknowledge a legitimate expression of broken heartedness. Gender has been observed to predict associations between music and certain emotions (e.g., Hakanen, 1994; Hakanen, Ying, & Wells, 1999), thus it is possible that the gender balance of the group had some impact on this agreed meaning. If there were male informants in the group,

then maybe there would have been more negotiation or even debate on the matter.

Overview and discussion

The present study investigated how people describe their experiences of listening to nominally sad music, and how they discuss and express the emotions they experience in a group interview situation. The use of self-selected music tracks provided a wide variety of different music types and gave informants a chance to investigate and reflect on the lived experience. This occurred both prospectively and retrospectively, as is often the case in IPA research.

The analysis revealed several socially shared meaning-making processes, as the informants negotiated the meanings of both musical expression and emotional content. Instead of presenting sadness as a fixed emotion concept, they distinguished various kinds of sadness with different meanings (e.g., private versus public sadness, masculine versus feminine sadness, and comfortable versus frightening/hopeless sadness). This challenges the view that sad music is only representing basic emotion *sadness,* which induces certain emotional responses in the individual listener (e.g., Juslin, 2013). On the contrary, music was collectively *used* by the informants in the construction of the idea of what sadness is and how it is to be experienced. Rather than a stimulus, music appeared as a form of conceptual information for emotions as it provided a *musical context,* or as Krueger (2014) suggests, a *joint attentional framework* for the emotional experiences (see also DeNora, 2010). These experiences were

affected by expectations of the musical style, structure, and performance, as well as expectations of the emotional content of music. Additionally, social norms and cultural conventions played important roles in the negotiations.

The present study also shed some light on the experience of listening to emotionally meaningful music. On the one hand, lived experience is characterised by a fluctuating nature. The lived experience keeps changing and is shaped by contextual and extramusical information (e.g., other peoples' interpretations of the same piece of music). On the other hand, emotional experiences related to self-selected sad music seemed to be well established. These emotional experiences are familiar and often sought after, even though the presence of others can make it difficult to experience the desired emotional reaction to music. Furthermore, the awkward feelings that some of the informants experienced during the discussions might be related to the unnatural situation, but it also suggests that the experiences evoked by emotionally meaningful (sad) music are a delicate topic, thus talking about such emotions needs to be framed with humorous comments and (fake) laughter (see Haakana, 2012). Nevertheless, informants' accounts revealed their capability to have rich emotional experiences – even in a research setting.

Besides describing their emotional experiences, all of the groups spent a great deal of time on describing, discussing, and interpreting the music. This could suggest that it might indeed be difficult to distinguish what is being heard from how it actually feels. Thus, in the case of lived experience, the distinction between felt and perceived emotions (Gabrielsson, 2002) may be rather fuzzy.

Furthermore, although the musical background of the informants in G3 was different from the others, there were no obvious differences (apart from lacking as granular a vocabulary for musical features as the musicology students) in their way of discussing their experiences. They did put slightly more effort into creating a positive and co-operative situation, especially compared to G1, where the critical attitude and self-consciousness of the informants seemed to create more personal awkwardness in sharing experiences. This might be due to the fact that the informants in G3 did not know each other beforehand, and thus felt the need to strive together for a socially satisfying result and improved group cohesion (cf. Forsyth, 2010). Also, since G3 was an all-female group, it is possible that the gender of the informants had an effect on their interaction, as women tend to have better perception of social and nonverbal cues compared to men (e.g., Ambady & Rosenthal, 1992).

The present study is one of the first attempts to investigate listeners' musical emotions as an interactional phenomenon. There are some limitations that need to be recognised. Firstly, focus group interviews are often criticised for only offering a shallow understanding of an issue, as personal experiences are often not being discussed (Liamputtong, 2011). This was also the case in the present study. The research setting seemed to prevent the informants from sharing autobiographical associations, which have previously been observed to be highly important for emotions induced by self-selected sad music (e.g., Eerola, Peltola, & Vuoskoski, 2015; Taruffi & Koelsch, 2014). Therefore, although these associations might have been important to the informants, they may have felt reluctant to spend time describing them to the others. However, as the aim of

this study was to shed light on the socially shared meaning-making processes, the choice of method was considered justified. Secondly, although some of the non-verbal communication of the informants was included into the analysis, there are multiple levels of interaction that could not be grasped with IPA. Analysing similar dataset by using conversation analysis method would provide more detailed information about the group interaction. Yet, as the aim was to try to "make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their personal and social world" (Smith, 2004), choosing IPA as the analytic strategy seemed legitimate.

In conclusion, this study of joint music listening and shared lived experiences shed new light on how musical and emotional experiences are formed in a group interaction. The negotiation of meanings within a social group is an important aspect of music listening. This is a means of conceptualising music and any associated emotions. Additionally, negotiation of meanings allows one to share listening experiences, understand others' experiences, develop new interpretations of music, and feel socially connected with others. These outcomes occur through agreement with others' interpretations, persuasion of others to agree with one's own interpretation, or collective construction of a new interpretation.

The negotiations observed in this study were based on a prior assumption of the musical expression of sadness. This undoubtedly guided and restricted the discussions. In future, it should be investigated whether or not other forms of musical expression lead to similar negotiations within groups. This could help

elucidate whether or not there is something distinctive about the way people share their experiences of sad music. Also, since this study utilised group interview for a data gathering method, the negotiations might have been different than those in a naturally occurring situation. An ethnographical approach might provide more in-depth knowledge of musical emotions as an interactional phenomenon. Furthermore, other music-related situations (e.g., playing together or attending a concert) are built on these kinds of social negotiations, which should be emphasised in future research, with a view to improving our understanding of the intersubjective nature of music.

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Appendix 1

List of music tracks.

Code	Artist/composer	Name of the song
E1	Vangelis	La petite fille de la mer
E2	Sammal	Kylmää usvaa
E3	John Williams	Main theme from the film “Schindler’s list”
E4	Guthrie Govan	Waves
E5	Nick Drake	I Was Made to Love Magic
E6	Traditional folk song	Narvan marssi (March of Narva)
E7	Anthony and the Johnsons	Hope there’s somebody
E8	Arvo Pärt	Tabula rasa, 1: Ludus
E9	Jose Gonzalez	Crosses
E10	The Klezmatics	An Undoing World
E11	Apulanta	Odotus
E12	Minä ja Ville Ahonen	Kerro minulle rakkaani