CultureCase

The effects of music listening at different life stages

This research was conducted by **Jenny M. Groarke** and **Michael J. Hogan** at the **National University of Ireland, Galway.**

Summary

This study sought to determine how mood enhancement and other positive effects of music listening interact to support wellbeing, and how these factors differed between younger and older people. Mood regulation and social connections were more important to younger adults, in comparison to older people (for whom personal growth and transformative experiences were more valuable).

The positive effects of music listening are interrelated

Focus group discussions were held with two groups of younger adults aged 18 to 30 and two further groups of adults aged 60 to 85, in which they were asked to consider the question “why do you listen to music?” Participants then rated all responses by importance, and the ideas were then grouped to identify common themes. More detailed analysis allowed the links between different impacts of music listening to be identified, showing how various positive influences interact.

Music has different impacts across the life course

The younger participants listened to music to engage in reminiscence, to gain a feeling of personal space, and to give personal meaning to life events. Through impacts on their emotional state and social connections, music supplied entertainment and security. Older adults indicated that music listening results

in strong emotional experiences and transcendent feelings, allowing them to move outside of their daily lives. Ultimately music listening in this group enhanced personal growth and meaning, which is known to be more important in later life. The researchers suggest that these findings may help to promote age-appropriate music interventions to enhance wellbeing throughout the lifespan.

This summary is by **Vicky MacBean, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

focus group **Emotions** **wellbeing** **music**

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