Music for Hedonia and Eudaimonia During Pandemic Social Isolation

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ABSTRACT: The pandemic spread of the novel coronavirus and associated COVID-19 disease in 2020 prompted governments around the world to pursue strict containment protocols to minimize contagion risk. Although restrictions were interpreted more strictly in some countries than in others, widespread social isolation resulted on an unseen scale, leading to severe negative mental health consequences such as loss of hope, increased anxiety, stress, depressive symptoms, and sleep disturbance. During this time, while governments were battling the health crisis, musical engagement provided key, individualized coping strategies for laypeople. This was first demonstrated anecdotally in captivating balcony music videos from Italy and Spain and later substantiated in large-scale, multi-country survey studies. This chapter reviews the emerging research literature on music listening and making during pandemic lockdown to establish how music became a compensatory source of hedonic pleasure and how it satisfied the need for eudaimonic meaning in life during socially and psychologically impoverished times.

When the World Health Organization's (WHO) country office in China first picked up a regional media statement on odd cases of "viral pneumonia" in Wuhan, Hubei province, on the last day of 2019,¹ not many realized the somberness of this omen of challenging years ahead. Within months, the novel coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, and the COVID-19 disease that it causes had impacted nearly all communities worldwide leaving a glooming trail of overburdened healthcare systems, premature deaths, and widespread angst in its wake. Devoid of vaccines and scientifically validated treatment regimes, governments worldwide introduced and steadily tightened a wide variety of non-pharmaceutical containment measures. The resulting societal shutdowns were on a hitherto unseen scale. Accompanying deteriorations in mental health and well-being created an urgent need for effective, widely accessible, and lockdown-compatible psychological coping strategies. Active engagement with media content—and especially creative art forms such as music—oftentimes fulfilled this need. Throughout this chapter, the term "coronamusic" will be used to characterize the cultural products resulting from engaging with music during COVID-19 lockdown in ways that make either direct or indirect reference to pandemic life circumstances or the coronavirus itself (cf. Hansen et al., 2021).

The implemented containment measures were documented in comprehensive datasets made available to the public (Desvars-Larrive et al., 2020; Hale et al., 2021; Porcher, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020). Collectively, these research efforts document combinations of: bans on mass gatherings; curfew; cancellations of cultural and sporting events; closures of restaurants, bars, shops, schools, and venues; domestic and international travel restrictions; public testing and surveillance programs; quarantines; face mask mandates; police/military deployment; and postponement of democratic elections. Predictably, financial hardship ensued on the systemic and individual levels, calling for supplementary economic support policies, including wage support, stimulus checks, credit schemes, alongside cuts and deferrals to taxes and fees. While government responses increased most prominently around the pandemic declaration by WHO on 11 March 2020, many of them remained in place far beyond 2020 (see Fig. 1). At the time of writing (September 2021), it remains unclear whether life will ever fully return to

¹ "Timeline: WHO's COVID-19 response" retrieved from the website of the World Health Organization on 7 April 2021 (<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/interactive-timeline>).

pre-pandemic norms even once vaccination efforts catch up globally and SARS-CoV-2 has achieved its predicted endemic status (Veldhoen & Simas, 2021).

Figure 1. Development in the interest in corona-themed music, mental health, and government restrictions around the world during 2020. Coronamusic interest was quantified via weekly Google Trends data for the search term “music AND corona” (thin, jagged, dark line; sourced on 12 February 2021) fitted with an overlaid LOESS curve (thick dark line with shaded 95% confidence intervals). Mental health trajectory from 23 March to 3 August 2020 is exemplified with depressive symptoms in the English population as assessed by Fancourt et al. (2021) using the *Patient Health Questionnaire* (PHQ-9) (diamond shapes). Lockdown intensity was quantified via the stringency index from *Oxford COVID-19 Government Response Tracker* (Hale et al., 2021) averaged across all 186 featured countries (thick, dashed line). Country-specific stringency indices are also plotted (ultrathin, gray lines). The y-axis simultaneously represents the percentage of maximum search activity for Google trends throughout 2020, depressive symptoms scores, as well as the scale of the stringency index. The SARS-CoV-2 outbreak was formally declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 11 March 2020 (dashed, vertical line).

These dramatic intrusions upon personal liberty, movement, and social life instigated an accompanying mental health epidemic (e.g., Hossain et al., 2020; Tsamakis et al., 2021; Vindegaard & Benros, 2020). Psychological adversities included increases in depression, anxiety, stress, panic attacks, irrational anger, impulsivity, somatization disorder, sleep disorders, and emotional disturbance. Pertinent stressors such as social stigma, boredom, feelings of guilt, fear of infection, uncertainty, and financial loss further induced posttraumatic stress symptoms (Hossain et al., 2020). Depressive symptoms in the adult English population ($n > 70,000$) declined slightly as restrictions eased over the summer of 2020, but remained high with consistent averages within the mild depression range (Fancourt et al., 2021) (Fig. 1). Unlike the acute and sometimes long-lasting symptoms of coronavirus disease itself, lockdown-related psychological health deterioration affected the entire population—not just those who contracted the virus.

During the initial phase of the crisis, governments were understandably preoccupied with urgent medical matters. Hence, the societal collective constituted a key instigator of psychological pressure through enforcement of physical distancing measures whereas steps towards alleviating the negative mental health consequences were largely left to the individual. Many saw themselves with extra time on their hands—either because they were unable to work from home or because they were freed from lengthy commuting times and commitments outside their homes. Mak et al. (2021; also see Eden et al., 2020) demonstrated how people engaged in multifarious leisure activities falling into four overall categories: digital arts and writing, crafts, reading for pleasure, and musical activities. Individuals who were young, highly educated, worried about infection, used emotion- or problem-focused coping

strategies, or experienced social support were overall more likely to increase their arts engagement during lockdown. Relocation of arts activities to the digital sphere may have instigated opportunities for creative activities across wider socioeconomic spectra.

Musical lockdown activities took various forms from live-streamed concerts (Swarbrick et al., 2021), splitscreen recordings (Hansen et al., 2021), daily rituals of balcony singing and clapping for healthcare workers (Imber-Black, 2020) to virtual raves (Palamar & Acosta, 2020) and listening parties (Lee & Kao, 2020). Amateurs and professionals took part as creators and consumers alike via new tele-conferencing and video-editing technologies and well-known social media platforms. On YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok, the #coronasongs, #quarantunes, #covidance, #pandemix, and #songsofcomfort hashtags proliferated. Interestingly, the peak in coronamusic interest appears to predate the peak in containment measures (Fig. 1). This raises the possibility that both psychological struggling and increased musical engagement could be driven by fear of a globally spreading virus before it arrives rather than by tangible experience with viral exposure or containment measures.

In any case, the historical precedence for widespread music-making during prior pandemics (Chiu, 2020) suggests that universal psychological coping mechanisms may be at play (Sarasso et al., 2021). Yet, while videos of Italians and Spaniards singing from their balconies cannot help put a smile on most people's faces, the scientific basis underlying music's allegedly healing powers on the human psyche remains somewhat obscure—both in general terms and in the specific context of an ongoing health crisis. In this regard, sensationalist media reports can be deceiving and certainly cannot stand alone (Deaville & Lemire, 2021; Hansen et al., 2021).

The current chapter aims to address the following research question: *What role did musical activities play in people's psychological coping under pandemic isolation, and to what extent were these behaviors driven by motivations of a hedonic vs. eudaimonic nature?* In doing so, I will critically review the emerging research literature on music listening and making during lockdown, zooming in on coping efficacy and moderating factors. Drawing on the contents of a crowdsourced database of coronamusic (Hansen et al., 2021), I will furthermore discuss which musical repertoires were preferably consumed and created.

Pandemic Music Listening

Objective, consumer-based user statistics and subjective, self-reported measures offer divergent perspectives on the quantitative aspects of pandemic music listening. While aggregated weekly streaming counts of the top-200 songs on Spotify decreased by 12.5% on average (Sim et al., 2020; Yeung, 2020), YouTube plays for the same artists increased significantly (Sim et al., 2020). These changes were directly associated with declines in mobility (sourced from Google and Apple), to most government restrictions (except for school closures and limits on private gatherings), and to number of COVID-19 cases (but not deaths). Reduced commuting and home confinement may thus have instigated a switch from audio- to video-based platforms (Carlson et al., 2021).

When asked directly, most participants reported increased music listening during lockdown (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021; Carlson et al., 2021; Ferreri et al., 2021; Fink et al., 2021; Mas-Herrero et al., 2020; Ribeiro et al., 2021a, 2021b; Steinberg et al., 2021; Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021)—paradoxically, also for Spotify (Hurwitz & Krumhansl, 2021). Individual differences are, however, substantial, and some studies found no to little change (Carlson et al., 2021; Krause et al., 2021; Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021). Canadian university students deemed music listening the most frequent solitary, extra-curricular activity during lockdown (Finnerty et al., 2021). Potentially, decreased quantitative listening, increased self-reported listening, alongside switching towards video-based platforms could arise from more attentive, meaningful listening modes subject to lower degrees of distraction. This interpretation would be consistent with observations that video-based social media platforms (e.g., YouTube) may be more conducive to emotional contagion than message-based ones (e.g., Twitter) (Rosenbusch et al., 2019).

Coping efficacy

The fact that similar increases were reported for many other domestic activities—like watching news and movies, calling friends, cooking, cleaning, and sleeping (Fink et al., 2021; Muñiz-Velázquez et al., 2021; Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021)—raises the pertinent question whether changes in musical habits were merely an epiphenomenon of home confinement. Survey studies on qualitative motivations for engagement and perceived coping efficacy suggest that this was not the case. In pandemic times, at least half of the general population used music for coping (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021; Fink et al., 2021; Kiernan et al., 2021; Martínez-Castilla et al., 2021; Sameer et al., 2020). While active music-making activities like singing and dancing were deemed the most effective (along with music listening), they were also the most ceased (Kiernan et al., 2021). This may have increased the relative appeal of music consumption relative to music creation. By comparison, pandemic TV watching and social media usage were overall negatively associated with well-being (Krause et al., 2021; Muñiz-Velázquez et al., 2021).

Participants in Granot et al.'s (2021) multi-country study ranked the importance of wellbeing goals for coping as follows: (1) enjoyment, (2) venting negative emotions, (3) sense of togetherness, (4) self-connection, and (5) diversion. While they considered music the most effective activity for achieving enjoyment, venting, and self-connection, music, moreover, provided diversion equally well as entertainment and ranked second after socialization for enhancing togetherness. In a similar vein, Australians found music listening the most effective creative activity (Kiernan et al., 2021) or rated it at least as effective as exercise, sleep, and changing location (Vidas et al.'s, 2021). The emphasis on hedonic factors was substantiated by Fink et al.'s (2020) findings that the motivations for musical engagement showing the strongest increases were enjoyment, mood enhancement, relaxation, and energization. Findings that positive reframing and active coping strategies were strong predictors of musical coping, however, suggest that eudaimonic factors also played a role (Henry et al., 2021). Mas-Herrero et al.'s (2020) participants found music best for coping with psychological distress, outperforming watching series/movies, reading books, and physical exercise. Of particular interest, hours of musical engagement during (but not before) lockdown were negatively associated with distress. Relatedly, Krause et al. (2021) found that life satisfaction was positively associated with music listening, but negatively associated with watching TV/videos/movies at the within-person level. Equivalent negative associations emerged between watching TV and eudaimonic as well as hedonic well-being (Muñiz-Velázquez et al., 2021). While most people experienced equally strong emotions in response to music during lockdown compared to before, increases were slightly more frequent than decreases—but this was also the case for non-music-induced emotions (Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021). Musical activities in children increased during lockdown, and parents used music significantly more for emotion regulation and for connecting socially with their offspring (Cho & Ilari, 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2021a; Steinberg et al., 2021). Taken together, these results strongly confirm pre-pandemic findings that music listening is capable of effectively enhancing wellbeing (Randall & Rickard, 2017; Saarikallio, 2011).

Moderating factors

Whereas COVID-19-specific, contextual factors had limited influence on the perceived efficacy of musical behaviors for wellbeing enhancement, individual factors—such as employment situation (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021)—showed stronger moderating effects. In general, younger people and those with higher levels of musical training reported greater efficacy (Henry et al., 2021; Martínez-Castilla et al., 2021). These effects were, however, fully mediated by the perceived importance of music (Martínez-Castilla et al., 2021), which was significantly higher in younger and musically trained individuals (cf. Granot et al., 2021). Relatedly, Fink et al. (2021) found this factor to be amongst the six strongest predictors of pandemic coping with music. Fear of infection and of overall pandemic consequences predicted musical engagement for social interaction and for positive affect regulation, respectively (Ferreri et al., 2021).

Different age groups seemed differentially motivated although effect sizes were modest and the directions remain unclear. One study reported a tendency for the use of music for emotional self-regulation and anxiety reduction to increase with age whereas use of music for loneliness reduction showed the opposite pattern (Martín et al., 2021). Conversely, another survey found that music reduced loneliness with higher efficacy in elderly age groups while also achieving enjoyment with higher efficacy in younger age groups (Granot et al., 2021; Martínez-Castilla et al., 2021).

Use of music as a proxy for social interaction was overall more prominent in people experiencing positive emotions whereas those experiencing negative emotions relied on music for solitary emotion regulation (Fink et al., 2021; see also Ribeiro et al., 2021b). Whereas the latter group were most strongly dissociated on hedonic motivations like distraction, daydreaming, negative emotion venting, comfort, and stress reduction, the former group were most strongly dissociated on eudaimonic motivations like spiritual and aesthetic experience, cultural connection, and identification with the artists and others. Felt connectedness with the artist during live-streamed concerts, however, correlated positively with pandemic-induced stress and could be enhanced by wearing virtual reality headsets (Onderdijk et al., 2021b). Social connection was rated higher when virtual concerts were live-streamed in real-time rather than played back afterwards (Swarbrick et al., 2021). Mas-Herrero et al. (2020) found that individual reward sensitivity (which may be thought of as hedonic susceptibility) fully mediated the negative association between music activities during lockdown and pandemic depression.

Supporting the notion of music as a universal pandemic coping strategy (Chiu, 2021; Sarasso et al., 2021), cross-cultural differences between the countries surveyed were generally small, albeit with a slight tendency for collectivistic cultures to rate efficacy higher than individualistic cultures (Fink et al., 2021; Granot et al., 2021). Gender effects were also negligible (Granot et al., 2021; Henry et al., 2021).

Music selection

Music selection behavior was affected by lockdown life. Participants reported listening more to happy music, newly discovered music, and music from one's childhood whereas listening to sad music decreased (Ferreri et al., 2021). Selection of happy and novel music was associated with individual inclination towards using music for emotion regulation, happy music was associated with cognitive reappraisal, and sad music with young age. Those who sought music-related activities to mitigate negative emotion listened more to happy music. Analyzing acoustic features accessed through the Spotify API, Hennessy et al. (2021) found that the extent to which people were affected by the pandemic correlated negatively with loudness and energy, but positively with acousticness. Music which university students listened to during lockdown tended to contain lyrics and be in the major mode, albeit with predominantly negative valence (Vidas et al., 2021). The lack of pre-pandemic controls, however, makes it hard to assess how much these behaviors differed from usual listening habits. Survey studies found that 25-31% had explored new musical styles, and more than half had discovered new musical artists while in lockdown (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021; Fink et al., 2021). Hurwitz and Krumhansl (2021) collected specific "signature songs" that participants associated with the lockdown period, emphasizing positive, negative, and mixed emotions alongside strong memories and nostalgia.

Nostalgia

One musical characteristic receiving particular interest was nostalgia. Indeed, media-induced nostalgia has previously been proposed to enhance psychological and subjective wellbeing through both hedonic and eudaimonic mechanisms (Wulf et al., 2018). Yeung (2020) operationalized nostalgia as release dates older than 3 years in 17 trillion Spotify plays in Belgium, France, Italy, Spain, UK, and Sweden in January-July 2020. In addition to seasonal peaks around Christmas (and Swedish Midsummer), nostalgic music consumption increased systematically with peaks around 80 days after lockdown was introduced. The effect of COVID-19 incidence rate was much less pronounced. While listening to older music may have increased, nostalgic-themed Spotify playlists did, however, not exhibit significant increases in

followers (Sim et al., 2020). As the nostalgia effect eventually declined despite continued lockdowns, Yeung (2020) speculated that nostalgia could be less prominent during later epidemic waves.

Based on self-reports, 36% declared increasing consumption of nostalgic music (Fink et al., 2021), and 68% reported having listened to nostalgic music at least weekly during lockdown (Gibbs & Egermann, 2021). When asked to explain why they had listened to specific nostalgic songs, participants in the latter study provided reasons that typically related to memories of a prior life period (55%), a significant person or people (34%), their own identity formation (24%) or perspectives on life (14%), a specific event or situation (18%), a place or travel destination (12%), a prior trauma (8%), or a musical performance (8%). Emotional associations with self-selected music were overly positive (66% compared to 11% negative and 19% mixed) which could be suggestive of coping efficacy.

Beyond the European context, Granot et al. (2021) detected cross-cultural differences. Specifically, nostalgia only mediated the relationship between distress and negatively valenced music in collectivistic but not in individualistic cultures. Such collective nostalgia was enthusiastically cultivated online. During Tim Burgess' more than 750 listening parties, thousands of fans from 150+ countries synchronously listened to past music while partaking in live, interactive commentary together with band members on Twitter (Lee & Kao, 2020). In addition to the somewhat antiquated practice of listening to entire albums from beginning to end, topics were prominently commemorative with communal sharing of treasured memorabilia and concert memories. Quantitative streaming data, survey responses, and observational studies of online music events thus all allude to the eudaimonic potential of listening to nostalgic music as an approach-related coping behavior during the pandemic. Nostalgic music may moreover have been pursued for hedonic pleasure or distraction (Lee & Kao, 2020).

Coronamusic

When music consumption partly migrated from Spotify to YouTube (Sim et al., 2020), some listeners turned towards the topical repertoires of corona-themed music (cf. Hansen et al., 2021). At least 87.5% of Israelis were exposed to coronamusic videos, with the greatest prominence of humoristic clips followed by splitscreen recordings and performances in empty concert halls and musicians' homes (Ziv & Hollander-Shabtai, 2021). Thirty-one percent of Spanish respondents enthusiastically followed musical initiatives designed to enhance wellbeing during confinement whereas another 24.2% were aware of them and had created or participated in some capacity (Cabedo-Mas et al., 2021). Some studies found higher engagement with live-streaming media (Carlson et al., 2021) whereas others found no overall change in watching virtual or recorded concerts (Ferreri et al., 2021). Yet, those who used music to overcome social isolation attended more virtual concerts. In a thematic analysis of YouTube comments in response to eight representative examples of coronamusic videos, Fraser et al. (2021) found a dominance of interaction, unity, resilience, identity, and emotion. With the possible exception of emotion, these qualitative findings seem indicative of eudaimonic listening motivations. Indeed, Fink et al. (2021) concluded that 57% had developed a moderate-to-extreme interest in coronamusic, and this interest, intriguingly, became the strongest predictor of socio-emotional coping via music. This suggests that tailoring musical practice to contextual factors and developing specialized repertoires may constitute an adaptive psychological strategy for coping through societal crisis.

Pandemic Music Making

Given the positive wellbeing outcomes of active music making outside of pandemic contexts (Daykin et al., 2018), it seems reasonable to hypothesize that singing and playing of musical instruments underlay crisis-related coping in 2020. Fink et al. (2021) showed that pandemic music listening and making were in fact driven by relatively similar motivations. Tellingly, frequent concert-goers were more likely to make music to cope during lockdown. Even so, people did not overall engage in more instrument playing—but possibly more singing, less dancing, and less composing (Ferreri et al., 2021). Once again,

it appears that the primary adaptations in musical behavior were more qualitative than quantitative. Different factors motivated professional and amateur musicians.

Professionals

The novel coronavirus crisis had obvious repercussions for professional musicians' financial circumstances and psychological well-being (Cohen & Ginsborg, 2021; Spiro et al., 2020). Many also faced unforeseen challenges managing unfamiliar software for live-streaming and remote teaching (Onderdijk et al., 2021a). MacDonald et al.'s (2021) interviews with members of *Glasgow Improvisers Orchestra* suggests that joint music making in virtual environments had the capacity to at least partly alleviate negative mental health through social connection, empowerment, and identity validation.

Some affluent popular artists organized and contributed to charity benefit concerts (McIntoch, 2020). Large-scale initiatives like the "One Love Asia Concert" (27 May) and "One World: Together at Home" (18 April)—the latter of which, organized by Global Citizen and curated by Lady Gaga, raised no less than USD 127.9 million—differed from their historical precursors in terms of more abundant distribution channels, greater geographical proximity of beneficiaries, and the intimate use of celebrity homes as concert venues.²

Relatedly, music provided an effective way of communicating public health recommendations to populations that were less reachable through traditional news media. Attentiveness and adherence may have increased when messages were combined with humorous mnemonics and carried by an admired artist with whom the audience could readily identify (Lemaire, 2020; Giuffre, 2021). During the pandemic, this emerged in artist-driven, playful hand-washing songs and topically tailored variations of Gloria Gaynor's "I Will Survive," Neil Diamond's "Sweet Caroline," Dolly Parton's "Jolene," and Pinkfong's "Baby Shark." Thus, by allowing the public further into their intimate spheres, celebrity figures were instrumental in strengthening international unity and promoting healthy behavior.

Amateurs

Amateur musical communities adapted to pandemic life through virtual choirs and ensembles. Switching to virtual format was more pronounced for singing (83%) and dancing (86%) than instrumental (60%) ensembles (Draper and Dingle, 2021). Lack of suitable technology and dedicated funding were indicated as the most common reasons for non-adaptation. Group identification and psychological needs satisfaction were rated significantly lower for virtual than for (retrospectively recalled) face-to-face formats. Yet, the fact that values remained within non-pandemic ranges suggests some coping efficacy of virtual choirs and orchestras.

Daffern et al. (2021) describe three overall modes of virtual joint music making: (i) *live-streamed* where individuals sing or play with performances live-streamed via social media; (ii) *live tele-conferencing* where Zoom participants sing or play live to the sounds from a designated leader (with microphones muted); and (iii) *multitrack* where a collective end-product is mixed offline from solo tracks supplied by individuals. This last format was pioneered in 2009 by the American composer Eric Whitacre who also launched his "Virtual Choir 6: Sing Gently" with 40,000 singers from 145 countries in 2020. Qualitative analysis of open-ended responses from virtual choir participants highlight six overarching themes: participation practicalities, choir continuity, musical elements, social aspects, wellbeing, and co-creation through singing. The overall experience of taking part in virtual choirs was often negative due to insurmountable technological challenges such as audio latencies and inability to hear one another along with less satisfying musical quality and reduced social connection.

² See <https://www.onelove.asia> and <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/one-world-together-at-home-impact>.

While members of the global shape-note singing community experienced similar grievances, they swiftly and innovatively adapted to changing circumstances (Morgan-Ellis, 2021). By combining multitrack recordings, muted singing via Zoom (“zinging”), joint singing via the low-latency software Jamulus (“jamzinging”), and live-broadcasting themselves singing along with another Facebook Live broadcast (“stringing”), they reconstructed sentiments of musical co-creation, liveness, musical growth, and shared memories. For many choir members, online singing thus formed a much cherished lifeline providing a sense of purpose, identity, and social anchoring during difficult times.

The social aspect of singing was indeed reported as missed the most by around half of ~5,000 Scandinavian choir singers in a study by Theorell et al. (2020). Professionals were slightly more likely to miss aesthetic experiences, flow, and physical training than amateurs. Norwegians missed social aspects more so than Swedes, which may be ascribed to stricter physical distancing measures in Norway compared to Sweden. Twenty percent of the neighboring Danish population revived their national song treasure (and flow TV) by participating in daily morning and weekly Friday night sing-along programs, catapulting the national songbook into best-seller status (Sørensen et al., 2021; Ulfstjerne, 2020).

The disappointment experienced by many amateur musicians (Daffern et al., 2021; Morgan-Ellis, 2021) and the self-reported quantitative ceasing of singing activities (Kiernan et al., 2021), in fact, suggest that whenever singing at home increased (Ferrerri et al., 2021; Fink et al., 2021), this could have been primarily driven by those who did not sing before lockdown. Balcony singing offered a treasured way of restoring individual agency against an incapacitating health disaster (Deaville & Lemire, 2021). Calvo and Bejarano (2020) argue that because the social messages and community resilience promoted by balcony music typically took priority over musical quality, amateurs and professionals participated side by side. Through interviews, motivations for balcony singing and playing were identified, including entertaining kids, relieving stress, battling loneliness, connecting with neighbors, recruiting followers, expressing affection, celebrating birthdays, solidifying cultural or national identities, commemorating the dead, meeting a social media challenge, and fulfilling one’s duty as an artist. Although participation varied widely between countries (from 36% in Spain to 4% in Mexico), it was generally associated with stronger feelings of togetherness (Granot et al., 2021). Yet, even in Italy whose balconies were heavily (over-)exposed in early pandemic media reports (Deaville & Lemire, 2021; Hansen et al., 2021), self-reported behavioral changes towards engagement in outdoors singing or playing were less prominent than overall increases in singing, playing, and composing music at home (Fink et al., 2021). People scoring high on openness to experience were generally more likely to sing or play music during lockdown (Finnerty et al., 2021).

Coronamusic

Music consumers’ demands for corona-themed musical repertoires and opportunities for engagement were effectively met by musical content creators across the physical and virtual spheres. Hansen et al.’s (2021) CORONAMUSIC DATABASE provides a geographically varied corpus of 465 music videos and 254 news reports surveying the coronamusic phenomenon on social media platforms. These corpora were collected through a combination of crowdsourcing and retrospective Google searches via the YouTube domain. The music videos document corona-themed musical repertoire and activities tailored towards both diversion and reflection. Specifically, hedonically motivated coronamusic included balcony singing, livestreamed concerts, virtual raves and listening parties whereas eudaimonically motivated coronamusic was represented, amongst others, by gratitude songs and resilience songs composed for frontline workers and the community at large, respectively.

By coding each database entry on a range of features—including settings, emotions, conflict, movement, joint performance, and musical genre—Hansen and colleagues describe a plethora of innovative musical responses where positively valenced sentiments—like happiness, humor, togetherness, and being moved—were particularly prominently expressed and discussed. This prominence of positive emotions—often presented at a “safe”, ironic distance—contrasts starkly with the cruel realities of a

global pandemic. Future research should aim to investigate the temporal dynamics and psychological causes of this affective incongruence.

Conclusion

Turning back to the overall research question of this chapter, music evidently played a significant role in psychological coping behavior during pandemic social isolation. This happened through providing solace for the individual, through strengthening collective resilience, and through serving as a valuable replacement for many of the everyday social interactions that people were severely deprived of. The adaptive effects of consuming and creating music were at least comparable to those of other popular creative activities such as crafting and cooking. At times, music's coping efficacy may even have exceeded that of more passive consumption of TV and video streaming services. Hedonic and eudaimonic motivations for pursuing musical activities were concurrently present and may indeed have complemented each other in constructive ways.

While a wide variety of strategies were efficacious for pandemic coping, it remains unclear if the same individuals relied on parallel behavioral strategies, or if the diversity of coronamusic (observed by Hansen et al., 2021, and others) rather reflected individualized coping tactics. This provides a promising avenue for future research endeavors. Constantly evolving technologies for music making and sharing offer novel affordances for individualized mental health interventions which, in turn, call for descriptive alongside prescriptive perspectives on digital engagement with music in a post-pandemic world.

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