Preprints.org

Article

Transcending Measurement: What Matters When Making-With Music for Equitable Wellbeing in Health and Social Care Systems

Marisa de Andrade [*] , Pamela Burnard , Deborah McArthur , Aaron Hawthorne , Leah Soweid

Article

Transcending Measurement: What Matters When Making-With Music for Equitable Wellbeing in Health and Social Care Systems

Marisa de Andrade [1,*], Pamela Burnard [2], Deborah McArthur [3], Aaron Hawthorne [3] and Leah Soweid [1]

[1] University of Edinburgh
[2] University of Cambridge
[3] North Lanarkshire Council

* Correspondence: marisa.deandrade@ed.ac.uk

Abstract: Research has long supported the use of and engagement with music as a catalyst for health and wellbeing. However, there is a lack of research exploring how the structures, rituals and 'minor gestures' that go alongside music-making, making-with the materiality of music and engagement, can positively impact health. Using assemblages of interconnected community music projects in North Lanarkshire, Scotland, as collective ethnographic entry points, we examine how collective routines and communal activities—through the interplay of material-discursive practices that play out in structural elements, memories, and shared experiences—contribute to the creation of meaningful social exchanges, stability, sense of belonging and becoming. We argue that the benefits of music 'interventions' are not solely outcomes from isolated activities, but from the accumulative habits and rituals they affect, offering a new perspective on health as a dynamic process. This reframing invites a transcending of measurement in relation to the impact of music on individual and social well-being. Through this, we challenge traditional, conventional wellbeing scales and measures, and call for a broader understanding of music's potential in addressing health inequalities, concluding with implications for scalable community music models that contribute to expanding possibilities for research-practice-policy partnerships in health and social care systems.

Keywords: music; transcending measurement; health and social care; wellbeing scales; measures; rhizomatic; material-discursive practices; community; health inequalities; systems

1. Introduction

Research has long demonstrated the positive impact of music on health and wellbeing. A scoping review of studies on how music affects health and wellbeing by UK healthcare researchers found engaging with music—whether through listening, singing, composing or playing an instrument—positively influences psychosocial variables (Dingle et al., 2021). Specific findings indicated that receptive and intentional music-listening were found to reduce pain (Çetinkaya et al., 2018), enhance social connections (Götell et al., 2009) and improve mood (Fernando et al., 2019). Singing has been shown to decrease agitation and support cognitive health (Mansens et al., 2018), while musical composition has been shown to foster social and cultural inclusion, promoting empowerment among marginalised groups (Bartleet et al., 2016; Travis & Bowman, 2012; Uhlig et al., 2019).

While much of existing research focuses on the direct therapeutic effects of music itself, there has been less attention paid to how the structures and rituals surrounding music-making can impact wellbeing. Collective routines and communal activities can contribute to meaningful social exchanges, stability and sense of belonging. Research has established a clear link between sociality, health and wellbeing, with social networks and greater social capital being found to provide a source

of resilience (Chatterjee & Noble, 2013; Friedli, 2009). Put simply, participation in community groups is an important determinant of health (Corrigan et al., 2023). Furthermore, Foot and Hopkins (2010) suggest that in addition to having hardships and problems to overcome, our most underserved communities also have social, cultural and material assets that can be identified and mobilised to help them overcome the health challenges they face.

While the role of music, making-with[1] music and music groups *as assets* are increasingly acknowledged, what matters in measuring its impact remains a challenge. Assets here are defined as *"cultural, natural and community resources known to improve health outcomes over space and time. They include artists and arts organisations; libraries; museums; heritage sites; green and blue spaces, exercise-related assets; legal or debt advice services and, importantly, the relationships and research-practice-policy partnerships connecting them"* (de Andrade et al., 2024).   The fluid, affective, and relational dimensions of engaging with music do not fit with conventional metrics, prompting the need for alternative ways of conceptualising and capturing change. Using interconnected music projects in North Lanarkshire, Scotland, as collective ethnographies comprising assemblages, this paper explores the power of shared experiences and the accumulative habits and rituals they affect. The analysis offers a fresh, community-led perspective on health as a dynamic process shaped by a collection of rhythms and relationships.

Collective ethnography is a research approach where multiple researchers – or in our case researchers, practitioners and/or policymakers – collaborate both methodologically and theoretically to study a cultural group or phenomenon, sharing their individual experiences and perspectives to build a more comprehensive understanding (Tuula et al, 2006). Our collective ethnographies – or entangled music projects, scenes or settings – emerge as assemblages that resist unity and favour multiplicity. Working with theory, we analyse the material-discursive practices of making-with music and how this affects and is affected by those the process encounters. We also trouble the concepts of 'interventions' and 'measurement' in relation to health and wellbeing in health and social care systems, defining these systems as *"constructed mental representations of relationships existing in the world to promote health for people"* (de Andrade et al., 2024). We argue that the benefits of music 'interventions' are not solely from isolated activities and engagements, but also from the accumulative habits and rituals they affect.

Our analysis of material-discursive practices emphasises the inseparable entanglement of materiality and discourse in shaping reality. This means that material objects (such as drums or other musical instruments), actions (such as drumming) and practices (such as meeting in a community centre to rehearse a musical composition) *are not* simply discursive or determinate representations of assets to help overcome health issues. Indeed, this reductionist framing takes us further away from the affective impact of making-with music, which is activated by actively participating in its creation and meaning-making thereby making change visible and possible.

The significant contribution of this article is therefore a new perspective of health and wellbeing as a dynamic process shaped by a collection of rhizomatic forces, rhythms and relationships that remain alive and push against the structures and limitations of rigid, 'broken' health and social care systems. This reframing denotes *"transcending measurement"* (de Andrade, 2024) or a re-making of self and the 'thing-power'[2] of communities making-with music as a way of expanding health and social care measurement.

---

[1] 'Making-with' is a term introduced by Donna J. Haraway in her book 'Staying with the Trouble', which offers provocative new ways to reconfigure our relations between the human and non-human and the possibility and vitality of 'making-with' things. In the context of this paper, we are exploring the power of 'making-with' music (Haraway, 2016).

[2]   Thing-power is a term introduced in 'Vibrant Matter' by Jane Bennett, who uses the phrase to capture the lively and active qualities of objects. She describes 'things' as having a powerful agency that act on us.

2. Putting Theory to Work: What Matters?

Our inquiry begins by drawing upon the insights of new materialism, and the *"horizontal ontology of vibrant matter"* (Bennett, 2010)[3] to think beyond western Enlightenment's binaries of language versus material; body versus mind; measurement versus entanglement. New materialist theorists acknowledge the vibrancy and agency of matter, both human and more-than-human (which include intra-actions with objects, spaces, places, things).[4] Emphasising the exploration of material-discursive practices[5] as one of our research approaches, we make an explicit call to the emerging 'affective turn' in health care research which values non-cognitive and non-volitional expressions of life, including feelings, animation, tactility and habits (Braidotti, 2013; Roelvink & Zolkos, 2015). From this stance, we focus our attention on the potentiality of 'sensing bodies[6] (Cooke et al., 2023), not as containers of inner potential, but as affective intensities always with the capacity to stretch forward – forming relational associations and assemblages that count as 'currency for social change' in health and care systems (Bennett, 2010; de Andrade, 2024).

In this paper, we do some serious rethinking with the 'vibrant matter' of 'making-with' music by mobilising the central force of 'thing-power'[7], and by highlighting the potentiality of the 'sensing body' we advance that the 'measurement market' needs to ask not just *what* are we measuring, but *why* are we measuring? We bring assemblages of projects through collective ethnography to illustrate the potentiality of the 'sensing body' to be attentive to the emergent; to act in collaboration, cooperation or even in interactive interference with materials and objects that have agency and vitality themselves – 'thing-power' – that enables the mapping of new conditions for 'transcending measurement' in health and social care systems.

New materialism brings together a set of post-qualitative theories calling for a shift away from the representational turn, towards the imaginative-material turn, centered on a model of distributive agency across more-than-human entanglements (Truman, 2019). For example, within health and social welfare spaces, this is enacted by a plurality of relationships, where the capacity of things – musical instruments, tables, whiteboards, instruments, tools, worksheets, books, images, pencils, water, props – enter into a mutuality of relations *with* human bodies; making-with humans and more-than-humans, whereby agency is shared within assemblages (Burnard et al., 2022). What counts here in terms of the value of 'measurement'?

Deliberately seeking to dismantle conventional hierarchies of mind over matter and systems of knowledge that do not accurately reflect the lived and felt experiences of community members represented by them, new materialist theories harness new ethical possibilities in health and social care practice settings by re-seeing materials as 'doing', as active with us, as making-with us in our entanglements. This is the ontological turn that comes by acknowledging what Jane Bennett (Bennett, 2010) describes as a 'swarm of vitalities' within our health and social care spaces: *"the capacity of things*

---

[3]   Page 22

[4]   More-than-human refers to contexts in which multiple species and processes come together that the human world is necessarily embedded within, permeated by and indeed dependent upon (see Rodriguez-Garavito, 2024).

[5]   Material-discursive practices emphasise the inseparable entanglement of materiality and discourse in shaping reality. This means that material objects, actions and practices are *not* simply representations of discourse that are measurable, but actively participate in its creation and meaning-making.

[6]   'Sensing bodies' is a term proposed by Cooke et al. (2023), which refers to the sensorial reverberations (audible, felt and observed) that spread, make and disrupt in bodies through intra-actions with materials and objects. The role of the sensing body, and the materiality of the body, is often under-theorized in comparison to knowing.

[7]   Jane Bennett (2010), a philosopher and political theorist, argues that objects and matter have 'thing-power', that is, the lively energy and/or resistant pressure that issues from one material assemblage and is received by others. The vitality of matter that we put to work here in this article is 'making-with music' but it is also the focus on the material partnerships and meetings of bodies (human, non-human and more-than-human) that co-constitute practices.

– *edibles, commodities, storms, metals … to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own … to articulate a vibrant materiality that runs alongside and inside humans"*. Bennett calls us to develop new ways of looking and responding, *"that enable us to consult nonhumans more closely"[8]* and an *attuning* to the thing-power of matter and matter's vibrancy.

Significantly, while new materialist theories advance a new ontology of things, this does not mean replacing an old reality with a new one, or one privileged centre for knowing with another. Quite the contrary in fact. Reality is seen as an active and *"messy, hyper-complex, high-velocity milieu"[9]* (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016), already containing eruptive forces of conflict, tensions as well as potentially synergistic attunements:

> *"… one loses one's origin, one's preconceived ideas of location and destination, one's belief in the importance of the centre. One is lost in a horizontal plane of movement, and on this plane one begins by ebbing and flowing between knowledge and ignorance."(Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016)*

Translated to what counts in 'transcending measurement' in health and social care systems, this passage is even more provocative. The convention has it that the world of 'measurement' directs attention towards a pre-set goal or when research has an object in mind and a plan with targets set a priori. Rather, from a new materialist stance, we call for a productive coalition of human, non-human and more-than-human bodies that are receptive, responsive and open to the *co-constitution* of learning, practice, policy and research (Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, 2016).

However, this re-focusing of attention towards relationships and entanglements with our material partners is not a simple feat. Following Driesch (1914), a re-imagining of ourselves within an entanglement of relations and a re-attunement with a more-than-human world will involve a dis-habituation. Here is where Bennett (2010) along with Haraway (2016) invite a curious disposition, a playful element in one's approach and *"to be willing to play the fool"* (Bennett, 2010)[10]. This particular stance aims to regenerate highly subjective and individual *ways of corresponding* with the world, and to become perceptually open, obscuring without denying existing tensions and conceptualisations. These correspondences may be productively seen as agential[11] expressions for their capacity to rearrange previous relations, and decide what new forms may become actual. The methodological question is therefore left open: how and in what way do such experiences come to matter in our practices? And how might this change the landscape of research and practice in health and social care systems considered to be fixed, rigid and often 'broken'?

What matters here? After putting theorists to work, we stay with the trouble by repositioning ourselves as practitioner-researchers resounding old research questions in new ways that invite new methodologies and methods that disrupt conventional human exceptionalist systems of thought in order to generate differential powers to reform concepts and practices. 'Making-with' often refers to collaborative creative processes and the use of diverse materials in art, design and other creative fields. 'Making-with' emphasises the exploration of ideas, experimentation with materials and the development of innovative solutions often with a focus on engaging with complex situations. It champions open-ended participatory enactment. 'Making-with' music involves body–material interferences which are explored, where the combining of materials with bodies are embodied, felt and physically negotiated act as a material–body making-with.

---

[8]   Page 108

[9]   Page 80

[10]   Page 15

[11]   Agential expressions express themselves as generative knowledges. Here we are inspired by Ursula Le Guin's quotation: 'We are volcanoes. When we [learners, teachers and researchers] offer our experience as our truth, as human truth, all the maps change. There are new mountains. That's what I want – to hear you erupting.' (Guin, 1989)

All of this means working differently with data – opening up what counts as data. Here, we enact how the data and researcher are all part of the same world. Here, posthumanism allows us to see how theories, practices, everything is/are always in relation. It follows that we cannot generalise about ways of doing or knowing things or about groups of people. Resisting the impulse to generalise is a challenge for research, because of the substantialising work that language does (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2013). The grammar of language brings into existence figurations of the human as a substance with an essence and a self-contained identity. This, in turn, determines how agency, causality and therefore 'measurement' is conceptualised in health and social care systems and research.

3. Materials and Methodology

Our methodology puts 'thing-power' to work across assemblages of interconnected projects, settings or scenes, which in themselves are not empty stages waiting to be furnished with data, but active milieus of bodies, materials and affective relations intra-acting with the force of thing-power. Whilst distinct, these three scenes are not separate.

3.1. Situating Collective Ethnography

Ethnographic research has increasingly evolved over the last few decades, moving beyond the lone ethnographer model and welcoming more collaborative and co-produced models; among them being collective ethnography. In this paper, we use *collective ethnography* to describe a multi-site/researcher approach where multiple entangled music projects function as collective 'entry-points' into a shared inquiry.

Collective ethnography shares links and overlaps with other forms of ethnography such as collaborative ethnography (Lassiter, 2005, 2019), duoethnography (Sawyer & Norris, 2012), and team ethnography (Erickson & Stull, 1998). All stress the importance of multi-researcher input and collaboration and the value of sharing experiences, reflections, and interpretations, to build a more comprehensive understanding. Rather than producing a single narrative or perspective, collective ethnography is composed of various stories (Lahelma et al., 2006)

Within the academic literature, collective ethnography has been applied a number of times in various settings. In a collective ethnography spanning three decades, a group of researchers engaged in fieldwork on a sugarcane plantation in Brazil, using this collaborative research method to form a nuanced and comprehensive portrayal of the socio-economic landscape and labour rights, capturing the complexities of social change (Sigaud, 2008). Meanwhile, an Academic Medicine research report applied collective ethnography to explore how attending physicians at select medical training units manage the complexities of their roles as both doctors and teachers, using the observations to generate themes to identify important next steps (Lemaire et al., 2017). In another paper, the concept of remoteness during the Covid pandemic was captured through a collective ethnography carried out by a multitude of researchers showing it as a complex emotional, social and political experience rather than just a geographic distance (Martínez et al., 2021).

The latter relates most closely with our inquiry. We seek to show how North Lanarkshire community groups gathering *through* music benefit not only from the music itself, but from the complex, entangled, relational encounters opened up through music-making, where meaning and measurement are co-created through the very act of participation.

3.2. The Interconnected Projects and Practices in our Assemblages

Our assemblages are situated in North Lanarkshire, Scotland's fourth-largest local authority with a resident population of approximately 340,000 facing unique health inequities. It has the highest rate of school exclusions among looked-after children, with 24.8% of children living in poverty compared to the national average of 23%. Additionally, over 21,000 residents live in the 5% most-deprived areas, with 75,000 within the poorest 15% data zones (North Lanarkshire Council, 2019). To

tackle this, North Lanarkshire Council approved an innovative five-year plan for arts and creative community activities in the local authority area in 2024 in collaboration with various multi-sectoral partners cutting across health, social care, justice, education and employability. The basis for this regional strategy is ongoing transdisciplinary applied research funding addressing health inequalities through the arts led by one of the authors (de Andrade), with a second author conducting applied fieldwork in North Lanarkshire as its community-embedded researcher (McArthur), and a third managing the overarching research consortium (Soweid).

A significant learning from our consortium called REALITIES in Health Disparities – which stands for Researching Evidence-based Alternatives in Living, Imaginative, Traumatised, Integrated, Embodied Systems – is evidencing the *value* of creative engagement as more-than metrics or key performance indicators for community wellbeing. We recognise that *being well* is a dynamic, affective state of being and doing that can be valued through mediums and models that are not transactional, unlike the various existing health and social care systems our consortium continuously encounters.

For the purposes of this paper, we focus on one asset hub (North Lanarkshire) out of five (our consortium extends across Clackmannanshire, Dundee, Edinburgh and Easter Ross in the Scottish Highlands); and one arts-informed approach namely music-making (we engage with multiple other creative as well as qualitative and quantitative approaches in REALITIES (de Andrade et al., 2024). In collaboration with transdisciplinary academics, practice partners (such as schools and Health Improvement) and local communities, North Lanarkshire Council's Arts Development Team has co-produced a series of creative engagements, which includes *All Ability Music* and the *North Lanarkshire Community Choir*, *Ah Cannae Sing* [I Cannot Sing] and *Sensory Storytelling* to help tackle inequity and improve wellbeing.

What binds these four different groups together is not just their creative form (music), but their focus on relational modes of engagement—relationship building, experience sharing, and wellbeing support. These modes of engagement pull away from standard models of 'intervention', together, they form *practice assemblages*—that is, flexible, ever-evolving configurations of people, settings, places, emotions, and materials that blend together to create meaningful, visible change over time. Rather than taking each of these projects as individual entities, we treat them as parts of a whole that responds to need, connects communities, and offers different ways to understanding health and wellbeing.

3.3. Data Collection, Meaning-Making and Making-With Music in Our Assemblages

At this stage of the inquiry, our paper – following the dominant paradigm in *Behaviour Sciences* – would be expected to describe the data collection and analytical process with sufficient details to allow others to replicate and build on the published results. By now, it should be clear, however, that presenting and interpreting empirical data in this way – to generate actionable, instrumentalised, generalisable results for repeated application – would be counter to our core argument. Stuck between a (methodological) rock and a hard place, we are compelled here to explain our method through a linear, 'traditional' delineation of data collection (see Table 1), while acknowledging that our projects cut across time, space and matter in different ways due to the very nature of our post-qualitative inquiry.

Table 1. Research Methods Details.

What?	Where?	Who? (Demographics/How many people have connected with the project since its inception)	When? (Frequency, length of time)	How?
Ah Cannae Sing	These sessions are run in an "as	First session was on the 3rd August 2024 in Motherwell	60-90 minute workshops scheduled across the year to align	The sessions are facilitated by professional musicians, usually expert vocalists. The sessions

	and when" basis, especially at opportune times to feed into new terms of the Arts & You class programme. They take place in a community setting within in North Lanarkshire.	Concert Hall, attended by 90 people of varying ages. Various other events since with targeted themes and groups, such as: - *Gaelic edition* – designed to educate about Gaelic heritage and teach some basic language skills - *Hormones and Harmony* – targeting people with lived experience of menopause - *Power of the Female Voice* – celebrating International Women's Day	with relevant moments or themes, rather than fixed in the calendar	follow a flexible workshop plan featuring 50% creative ice-breakers and warm-ups (to get people engaging with each other often strangers), while the other 50% of sessions focus on the very basics of good singing technique, finding your voice, and suspending judgement. The marketing for these workshops are usually done in a tongue-in-cheek challenging way, for example "Think ye cannae sing? We'll prove you wrong". Using the exact dialect and language that many will recognise as their own in the title and description of the workshop seems to be attractive.
All Ability Music	Jim Foley Community Centre, Wishaw Muirfield Community Centre, Cumbernauld Bellshill Cultural Centre	The majority are Additional Support Needs (ANS) participants with carers/ support workers. Average weekly participation across all three groups of 70 people (including support workers who also participate)	For people 15 years old and above, this runs for 32 weeks of the year with additional holiday provision. The sessions are 60 minutes.	By combining percussion with songs, attendees play as a group and are led by a professional musician. There is a focus on percussion, using various instruments such as drums, tambourines and egg shakers. Attendees are encouraged to engage regardless of ability or experience level and express themselves musically.
North Lanarkshire Community Choir	Airdrie Town Hall (Central Group) Muirfield Community Centre, Cumbernauld (North Group) Bellshill Cultural Centre (South Group)	Average weekly participation across three groups is 50 people Mixed demographics, majority female-identifying, aged 50+	For people 15 years old and above. This was initially called the "*Summerlee Singers*" and then the "*Airdrie Community Choir*" before "*NL Community Choir*". The choir runs 32 weeks of the year. Sessions are 90 minutes.	A non-auditioned choir led by professional musicians, open to anyone regardless of level or ability. Beginning with breathing and vocal exercises and warm-ups, attendees then learn various songs across genres. The aim is to build confidence in vocal abilities, encourage attendees to perform across North Lanarkshire and beyond, and to highlight the health benefits of singing in a group.
Sensory Storytelling	Additional Support Needs (ASN) schools	9 teachers and approximately 40 pupils	Blocks of 6-8 weeks in addition to one-off theatre events through Theatre in Schools Scotland and Scottish	Sessions are facilitated by professional artists from drama and music sector with experience of delivering in ASN schools. Delivered during the

across North Lanarkshire Currently engaging with Redburn, Glencryan and Mavisbank Schools	Opera. Sessions last for 30 minutes.	school timetable, to 3 sessions in a school day are held (with 3 different classes during the first block of activity). The aim is to enable pupils to take part in sensory workshops which brings stories to life. Teachers support the artists in these sessions and are currently undergoing training to become sensory storytelling champions for schools.

Two of us are community arts practitioners (McArthur and Hawthorne) advocating wellbeing through creative engagement and connected to informal health and social care systems through local government (North Lanarkshire Council). Two of us are academics with extensive experience in arts, creativities and educations (Burnard) and creative health, science and society with a focus on inequalities in health and social care systems (de Andrade). One of us is an academic project manager with research, practice and policy experience (Soweid). Collectively, we are (at least) the human elements of these assemblages along with all the community members we encountered along the way, either through in-person music engagements or through text, audiovisual or other forms of sensory 'data' in the meaning-making process. We also kept reflective notes, interviewed each other and some participants and project facilitators, and gathered community members' feedback through evaluation questionnaires.

As part of the 'multiplicities' (Deleuze & Guattari, 2013) within our practice assemblages, we also bring social, material and technical components that move with us as we make-with music as non-measurement (more on this in the Results section). Together, we have engaged with these projects – directly or indirectly, humanly or virtually, theoretically or practically – multiple times during the lifespans of these engagements, and also long before they were conceptualised and enacted in North Lanarkshire and beyond. We have been thinking with these projects (and many others like them) during the duration of this study, and will continue to think with these concepts long after this study ends. The work lives in us and through us, across an interplay of **material-discursive practices** that play out through 'mind-body-soul memories' and in structural elements (sound, harmony, melody, rhythm), memories, and shared experiences—contributing to the creation of meaningful social exchanges, stability, sense of **belonging and becoming**.

Ethical approval was received from the University of Edinburgh's School of Health in Social Science through institutional processes and protocols. As a consortium, REALITIES also promotes relational ethics and critiques accepted definitions of vulnerability and risk in ethics processes that do not seem to be aligned with the wants and needs of the underserved communities we are researching with (Jundler et al., forthcoming).

4. Results: Mattering Measurement

In this section, we turn our attention to the findings that emerged as we explored what matters in measurement. Inspired by Manning (2016), our research positions itself as a *"a minor gesture"* –*"a force that challenges received wisdom and common sense (the 'major') by offering potentially unlimited experiential variations that suggest alternative forms of being, knowing and doing"* (Simmons, 2018).

The 'major', in this paper, is the 'measurement market' that privileges 'validated', 'credible', 'practically tested' measures, frameworks and approaches that claim to demonstrate *"value for money and trustworthiness"* – rather than those that are more relational, dynamic, embodied and connected to an individual or community's ever-evolving lived and felt experiences (de Andrade, 2024). Wellbeing scales are included in this 'major', alongside metrics, targets, indicators and outcomes that are fixed without centring the person or population meant to be benefiting.

Our analysis unfolds by focusing on the *conditions of emergence for 'non-measurement'* in our assemblages of making-with music, such as collective routines and communal activities and also structural elements (sound, harmony, melody, rhythm), memories, and shared experiences in our projects and practices. Firstly, we reflect on rituals and objects as mind-body-soul memories in non-measurement. We then work with findings from our assemblages to frame time, space and matter as entangled systems of non-measurement. This is followed by illustrations of meaningful social exchanges and stability as musical non-measurement. Finally, we reveal how something new emerged in these systems and practices – namely, assemblages *becoming* more-than metrics in non-measurement.

4.1. Rituals and Objects as Mind-Body-Soul Memories in Non-Measurement

> *"When I'm thinking about the sensory storytelling project, it's the rituals and the habits for these young people with additional support needs and complex needs. Some of them have no language, but those habits and rituals is what connected to memory, and that then meant that they started to know when a piece of music began, what was happening. You know, it's those cues of understanding what's coming next…"*

Deborah's (author 3) voice drifted as she searched her mind's eye for the right words to capture that moment in that classroom surrounded by whiteboards and a storybook of "The Snail and the Whale": *"When in a traditional story setting, they might not be able to follow the music… it's the cues that you add within the workshop… that's what's then making that connection into the body, into the soul. You know, you could see them start to smile when music came on"* (interview).

Rather than simply reading the book from start to finish, the idea was to bring each 'thing' in the book to life and connect to it through embodied sense-making. If there was mud, the musical storytellers would have trees of mud so the young people could touch it. If there was water, they would have a bucket of water or water spray. Using material objects as literacy prompts, the 'thing-power' of the mud or water resonated at the start of the song-story, again in the middle as the tale unfolded, and at the end when the narrative quieted. Storytelling and music-making lifted the story off the page and into the minds-bodies-souls of the young people, who were raised by creating an *"original little song"* inspired by a fictional, restless snail on its travelling whale companion.

> *The introductory piece of music was used to move the story along and also sung at the end; punctuating the session while acting as an invisible calibrator throughout the thirty-minute session: "And from our process and the way that we worked, it was about drawing out themes and feelings and going beyond the world in which the book is set…so if we're in a pool of water, we're really exploring what that water is, what's in it, what does it feel, what does it smell like? What does it touch up against? That was really important for the storytelling, because some of these young people's engagement can't be through speaking or it can't be through touch because they're adverse to being touched or touching things. We really had to think of that multisensory element for everything that we did"* (Deborah, interview).

An opera singer, musicians playing brass guitar and the fiddle, singers and storytellers worked in pairs so young people did not experience everybody – or too much of the 'thing-power' – at the one time. That would be too big, too much for some with additional support needs (ASN) to cope with. But instead of overwhelm, there was the song. The same song starting every session, and also an image that would be held up to the class representing their story. Same song, same image, image, song – telling a sensory story over six weeks:

"And what was so beautiful about it was the rituals that we created. The way that we rolled in our trolley every week and the trolley had all of the materials on it. And so that trolley was a visual representation. Then the music was like a sound representation. The musicians also walked round the space the same way at the start of every session, and the young people could come and feel the vibrations on the instruments. And so, if they weren't connected, they could connect with the vibration because it was the same piece of music at the start. The vibration would be similar, so it was just that way of connecting in" (Deborah, interview).

School staff soon reported that when young people heard the song, some of them would want teachers to know that the song was something material, like a plant – a 'thing' that they could express their excitement through. They would run to the image and point. An indiscernible connective tissue emerged relating the music, to the story, to the artists:

"They know who the trolley is, they know what day of the week it is because we went in on the same day of the week as well. And so, the teacher would be would be able to say 'it's Thursday and what happens on a Thursday?' then they played the song. And so, as these connections were made, then the young people were able to evaluate [or measure the value of the project] using board maker symbols and a word that our ASN schools use. They were able to lay lots of board maker symbols out in front of them about: 'How did it make them feel? Did they enjoy it? What did they get out of it?' And they were able to point to different symbols" (Deborah, interview).

The music became a marker, measure or indicator for the school to use as an act of literacy as, according to their age and stage level and ability, these young people were in fact able to follow a book from beginning to end and understand the characters and the themes; also how it connected to their emotional wellbeing and how it made them feel – all through the medium of music as non-measurement:

"Through weekly observations of pupil responses, interactions, engagement, feelings/emotions and expressions, it was evident that the project was a very positive experience for our pupils. Stevie learned to say 'whale', so she would say this on arrival to class on Thursday. We displayed art work that they did during one session; this was a reminder of the story project to look back on, and the children would often use the word 'snail' and 'whale' whilst pointing to the pictures. We added a snail and a whale toy to our stuffed toy tray and the pupils would explore the story though props on a daily basis. When asked about their favourite bit of the story project, the children offered a word or a gesture. Stevie gestured a trumpet—she really enjoys music and musical instruments. She was given the opportunity to see and hear new instruments. Graeme said the word 'jellyfish'—he enjoyed holding up the umbrella prop that acted as a jellyfish. Riley said 'snails'— she really enjoyed exploring the different coloured snails" (interview, teacher).

It is poignant to reflect that in the 'real world' rather than this 'magical reality' co-created with musicians, teachers and young people, snails also hear by sensing vibrations through their bodies. These non-humans feel their environment through touch; their forms rubbing up against other 'assemblages' to detect sensations and make sense of materials around them. Perhaps, much like humans in touch with the more-than-human, they are also in touch with these moments of 'magical realism': *"When you are relating so deeply that you feel alive, awake. When you experience reality as something*

different. When you feel much lighter, clearer. Lucid. When you experience an alternative perception of time" (de Andrade, 2022).[12]

4.2. Time, Space and Matter as Entangled Systems of Non-Measurement

In Sensory Storytelling, musicians and facilitators became skilled at abandoning linear time, for example, by forcing sessions to be an hour long when they sensed students were becoming unsettled or over-stimulated. When the experience of staying-with the music-making became too much for some young people, instrumentalists would inherently know when to wrap up. In these moments, musicians replaced the melody for props – consumable materials brought along to sessions for young people to chew on or "*really get into them*". As Deborah explained:

> *"We weren't going to ask for them [objects] back and take them to the next class, but the nature of those types of materials meant that the young people could keep playing at their own engagement and level, but the session could end and they could jump off their trumpet as well… [the young people kept] playing with the prop or they could go and sit in their corner or they could go and walk around their classroom, but they were still engaging. One of the most engaging was a tiny little snail that we had and you could pull it back and it would race off, but they would run them over their bodies and they would, they would run them up and down their hand and they would want to chew them and bite them. But one little boy was keeping them safe in his pocket, so he'd really connected with this little snail… and I think that's it. You can never understand the way in which people are going to connect with the material that you offer, but you just have to have multiple layers of engagement and multiple points for them to connect with and then whichever one that is for them… it can't be prescriptive"* (interview).

We are struck by complementary contradictions in these assemblages – time being expansive and shortened; vibrations building excitement being 'pulled back' before the point of sensed over-stimulation; the runaway "tiny little snail" moving fast over bodies and then slow. The rhythmic pace of the sessions – fast, slow, compression, decompression – the vibrational energy of it all as entangled time-space-matter or "spacetimemattering"[13]: making-with music as a transcending of measurement. As Deborah reflected:

> *"… in any session, there is always a rhythm… it 'sits in you'. You know when it's in time and you know when it's off because you can feel it, you can feel it in the people. You can feel it in the response. You can see it. You know it's something quite palpable sometimes when you're off beat with your group or with the piece… when you're really trying to find that rhythm. And then when you find it, I always feel like my insides go 'and here we are'. You know that way? Like now we can dance together, you know… I don't know how you write that, but it is a feeling. It is a feeling"* (interview).

This affective energy sensed by all in the space motivated facilitators, musicians and students alike – "*the whole group*" to "*be on their feet helping… to get really up close*":

---

[12] Page 35

[13]   In spacetimemattering, "space, time, and matter are mutually constituted through the dynamics of iterative intra-activity. The spacetime manifold is iteratively reconfigured in terms of how material-discursive practices come to matter" (Barad, 2007, p. 181–182).

"I'm just thinking about Ryan [a musician] playing a saxophone that a little boy had his arms just linked right round it and Ryan was in the weirdest position trying to make this happen, but he just wanted to feel the vibration of it. And then Ryan had a noise for the wheel and one other little boy wanted to know how to make it. So, Ryan allowed him to put his fingers on the keys and he thought he was making that wheel sound, so to see his face of that engagement was really beautiful…" (Deborah, interview).

As Aaron (author 4) noted, all of this was unfolding within a space – not *"a big reverberant hall"* with a *"huge resonating instrument almost sort of blowing the roof tiles off"*, but a classroom that changed the *"dynamics completely"*. Teachers noted how the *"quite low ceilings"* and *"carpeted"* environment made for a *"totally different experience"* with those *"frequencies reacting in the room with the things in the room"*, which was *"amazing"*. The *"flipped dynamic"* and *"sense of ownership of their space"* – interconnected with attendees' non-linear experiences of time and engagement with material-discursive practices —contributed to the creation of meaningful social exchanges, stability and becoming (interview).

4.3. Meaningful Social Exchanges and Stability as Musical Non-Measurement

Across all projects, participants were vocal about the benefits and joy that came with the social aspect of being part of a music group. The settings provided opportunities for material-discursive practices, where emotional exchanges and social connections were both shaped by and expressed through music-making. In one example, an art tutor for the All Ability Music group noted that for people with additional support needs, classes created the environment to foster friendships that they otherwise would not have been able to:

"… they are quite isolated because they're just with their carers, so it gives them a wee bit of autonomy. Even deciding what chair to sit on, that's a big deal. And then making friends within the group, maybe someone decides they want to sing a song and do a duet with someone else in the group—you don't get that chance because if they have to be with friends, they always have to have a carer with them" (interview).

Meanwhile, North Lanarkshire choir members emphasised the importance of social support through community making-with music to improve their health outcomes. Nadine noted: *"For me, continuing with the choir has not only allowed me to continue singing, but has also introduced me to a new group of friends. I recently went through a health hiccup and everyone at the choir helped and supported me whenever I could attend. I'm sure this improved my recovery"* (questionnaire). Annie, a teacher for a class of children in the Sensory Storytelling project, added: *"The class interacted with the staff and became familiar with them over each session. This had a positive impact on pupil confidence, acceptance or unfamiliar adults visiting our class and pupil engagement and participation in new experiences"* (questionnaire).

The materiality of instruments, chairs, props, were imbued with social meaning—even the songs themselves became a medium through which participants engaged in friendship and social interaction. Such exchanges highlight how making-with music is a relational practice: a space where individuals build community and experience recognition. The social connections are not just in the music itself—they are enacted through it and with it. As Aaron stated: *"It's what the arts does best—it got people doing the thing, but it also created a wonderful safe space for people to get talking"* (interview).

Drawing from quotes and feedback from the music programmes, there were echoes of how the groups functions as an anchor—something familiar—in their weekly rhythms. The reliability of the groups, from the repetition of music sessions to the structures they follow, provided a material-discursive container of routine: be there at the same time of week, same location, and/or same attendees/instructors. This contributed to the environments being transformed into something secure. One All Ability Music attendee, Sandra, commented: *"I like meeting the people that run the*

class… I love chatting with you every week, I come in and you're asking how I am." Additionally, her support worker, Monica, shared that she had noticed Sandra becoming more tolerant and sociable since starting the class: *"I've noticed a massive difference in her"* (questionnaire). Other support workers noted a distinct change in an individual if the routine changed: *"I would say out of all the activities we do, if this class isn't on (school holiday-wise), it does really affect him, and he will always ask for it. If the class is cancelled, then he's really upset"* (questionnaire).

Regular, embodied participation across the ongoing making-with music groups has become integral to how people experience their weeks, also serving as a marker for loss. As Katie, a community choir member reflected: *"Without the joy, release, and escapism of singing, I think I would feel a massive void in my life… I feel singing is vitally important to my sense of wellbeing. When I don't get to sing, I miss it very much. I enjoy the company too and have developed very close and, I believe, lifelong friendships with some wonderful people"* (questionnaire).

The stability surrounding these friendship circles was also emphasised by facilitators, as *"repetition was really, really important"*: *"so the time they [community members] get the bus. They get the same bus every week. It's the same bus driver that you see, because that's that person's route and schedule, as well as the same café, at the same time. What you're eating when you come to the class… even just a change of time whether it's, you know, 'we're changing half an hour, we're changing it a day', then the ripple effect. Also, the safety they feel in that"* (Deborah, interview).

So many little connections that are made for someone to feel safe, find enjoyment and be well – room layout, lighting, temperature, the playlist for the day. All of these little intra-actions and 'things' that connect for someone to really receive the energy in the room with others.

4.4. Becoming More-Than 'Me' and More-Than Metrics in Non-Measurement

By staying close to these meaningful social exchanges in the space and tracing their relational happenings (Bondi & Fewell, 2016) something new emerged from these musical engagements between choir members, school facilitators, music instructors and community members. As well as being an *"avenue" for friendships and continuing friendships"* or a catalyst for *"that feel-good factor that you don't want to miss each week"* (Chrissy, interview), communal music-making opened up an unlimited space for perpetual movement or 'becoming'.

Individuals arrived as 'me' and left as 'we', individually and mutually transformed in some way through participation in the projects.   The relational, material-discursive practices shifted attendees from a 'self' into part of a whole – becoming a collection of 'selves' – emergence of a fluid, entangled, relational force that is, in itself, a non-measure of wellbeing. The evidence of this in relation to improved health outcomes came later, also through relational encounters when facilitators would bump into the choir or other community members at events. It was then that the mental and physical health advantages of making-with music in these mind-body-soul, time-space-matter entanglements were verbalised by participants, who were going to their doctors to overcome specific conditions.

They would frequently report how, for example, after four weeks of coming into music sessions and doing *"breathing every week and singing"*, they would get better: *"the transformation from when you [a participant] walks through the door and begins the class to when they're going out there is a complete transformation in a person's at least physical appearance. You know how loose they are, how there's usually a smile. You know, there's just a difference… again talking about rhythm thing. You're leaving the room, going out into the world with a much different rhythm going than you did when you when you came into it"* (Aaron, interview).

What counts here in terms of the value of 'measurement' is the quality of relationships within these assemblages, where musicians and facilitators are not disconnected performers learning their music, set lists and shows. Instead, they are embodied, responsive, attuned individuals, who are part of a whole, working collaboratively to promote a healthy system. As is the case in complex systems, this entails:

"… complete uncertainty when you're delivering a workshop, because it's not you standing up presenting to someone. There is an interaction and a push and pull, and a give and take… there's going to be someone trying to get at your instrument or wanting the prop that you've got or wanting to take your hand because they really want to engage you and another element of the exercise. And there you are playing your fiddle. I'm thinking of one of our musicians. She's holding her fiddle, but they've got her by the elbow and they're trying to bring it over, you know, 360… I don't think you can ever be 100% prepared and that brings me back to that rhythm and feeling. It's like you're there. You're improvising with the people in the room on a holistic level, where you're feeling from them, so you're giving them something from the feeling that you're getting from them and it's that back and forth… you are there to go with the flow and follow the story and respond to what the young people give. And when they have had enough music, [have] pieces [props] in your bag that you can pull out at any moment to keep the session going…" (Deborah, interview).

Deborah moves her hand like a conductor, her body sways from side to side, her voice drifts off. Once again, she searches her mind's eye for the right words to capture this moment. I (Marisa) find myself moving from side to side too, our bodies mirroring each other on screen in a virtual space.

"I don't know how you write about that, Marisa," she says without realising she is writing the script herself. *"I'm sure you will do it beautifully, but I keep going like this with it… [hands like conductor, bodies like branches on a tree in the wind]… because that's what it is. How do you turn that into something that you can write? It is a push and pull and a dance. It's really holistic feeling."*

Marisa thinks to herself: I'm becoming more-than 'me'. I am more-than metrics.

5. Discussion: The Value of Non-Measurement in Healthy Systems

Despite well intentioned efforts in health and social care – not least sector integration mandated by the Public Bodies Joint Working (Scotland) Act 2014 more than a decade ago to promote healthy communities and tackle inequalities – researchers and practitioners are still navigating complex, fragmented systems within this policy landscape. While 'the system' is criticised for being broken and traumatised, visionaries and executers are attempting radical transformation and whole-system redesign at local and regional levels (through efforts like the ones put forward in this paper connecting the arts to health and social care and education amongst other sectors); national levels (for example, through the mobilising community assets programme, which REALITIES is a part of); and globally (such as the Human Learning Systems approach to public service) (Centre for Public Impact, 2025; de Andrade et al., 2024).

Fundamental to this paradigm shift is challenging common assumptions about the value of 'measurement' as systems set out to serve the society of the powerful, in order to bring forth the power of a different gesture: one that nudges our attention away from what matters in terms of being well. This reframing denotes a transcending of measurement (de Andrade, 2024) in relation to the impact of the creative-relational, such as music-making, on individual and social wellbeing.

It is clear from our work that traditional, conventional wellbeing scales and measures fall short when it comes to evidencing the lived and felt experiences of people with complex needs and wants in complex systems. Using extractive and reductionist approaches to measure these individual or group's wellbeing may lead to "violent evaluation" rather than measurement scales that are "peaceful, playful, ecological and rational" (Roberts, 2025) and indeed helpful. Our research draws attention to the importance of collective routines and communal activities—through the interplay of material-discursive practices that play out in structural elements (sound, harmony, melody, rhythm), memories, and shared experiences—to contribute to the creation of meaningful social exchanges, stability, sense of belonging and becoming. This opens up possibilities for research-practice-policy

partnerships in health and social care systems to embrace, apply and mainstream participatory and affective non-measurement and evaluation design to confront bias, power, and the illusion of objectivity (McLean et al., 2025).

6. Concluding Thoughts: Transcending Measurement Matters

Upon tracing the rhythmic, relational practices of community making-with music, this paper has highlighted how wellbeing cannot be simplified through individualist measures and scales; rather it is an emergent, dynamic, collective force generated through the material, affective entanglements and relationships of everyday happenings. By being entwined in mind-body-soul collectives of community members, facilitators, carers, staff, researchers, practitioners, policymakers and musicians, we have shown how creative, embodied, day-to-day routines are so much more than entertainment or hobbies—they actively contribute to a sense of safety and self, familiarity and shared identity.

Taking part in these musical groups creates spaces for growing connections, as well as temporal anchors in the weekly lives of participants. Most importantly, the stories and exchanges scattered throughout our engagements challenge linear metrics and measurements. As wellbeing is invited through gestures, sounds and the comfortable predictability of chairs, instruments, movements and people – the ordinary everyday – benefits cannot be captured through traditional evaluation models and tools. Our research therefore contributes to a growing movement of re-imagining health and social care systems through creative-relational processes.

In order for policy and practice to evolve health and social care into systems that truly serve communities, promote wellbeing and address inequalities, we must continue to think outside the box of how value and impact can be understood and re-imagined. Policymakers are encouraged to embrace the potential of the affective and material-discursive engagements as essential 'community assets' that support health and wellbeing in complex systems. We must think and move beyond conventional and reductionist measurement approaches; a paradigm shift away from linear, outcome-driven frameworks is needed, towards approaches which foreground relational and embodied dimensions and wellbeing. This, in turn, will push against existing power dynamics and biases across measurements and metrics, contributing to whole-system(s) re-design. Moving forward, policies – and their evaluations – must nurture the multiple, interconnected, dynamic realities of those experiencing poor health or inequalities.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

ASN   Additional Support Needs

References

Barad, K. (2007). *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Duke University Press.

Bartleet, B.-L., Sunderland, N., & Carfoot, G. (2016). Enhancing intercultural engagement through service learning and music making with Indigenous communities in Australia. *Research Studies in Music Education*, *38*(2).

Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant Matter*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv111jh6w

Bondi, E., & Fewell, J. (2016). The power of examples. In *Practitioner Research in Counselling and Psychotherapy: The Power of Examples*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Braidotti, R. (2013). Posthuman Humanities. *European Educational Research Journal*, *12*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.2304/eerj.2013.12.1.1

Burnard, P., Mackinlay, E., Rousell, D., & Dragovic, T. (2022). Doing Rebellious Research In and beyond the Academy. In *Critical Issues in the Future of Learning and Teaching* (Vol. 23). Brill.

Centre for Public Impact. (2025). *Human learning systems*. https://centreforpublicimpact.org/our-work/human-learning-systems/

Çetinkaya, F., Aşiret, G. D., Yilmaz, C. K., & İnci, S. (2018). Effect of listening to music on anxiety and physiological parameters during coronary angiography: A randomized clinical trial. *European Journal of Integrative Medicine*, *23*, 37–42. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eujim.2018.09.004

Chatterjee, H., & Noble, G. (2013). *Museums, Health and Well-Being* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Cooke, C., Colucci-Gray, L., & Burnard, P. (2023). Sensing bodies: Transdisciplinary enactments of 'thing-power' and 'making-with' for educational future-making. *Digital Culture and Education*, *14*(5), 24–43.

Corrigan, O., Hughes, S., Danielsen, S., Doherty, S., & Kabir, R. (2023). The impact of engaging with community groups: asset-based approaches and the lived experience of socially vulnerable populations in the UK. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *11*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2023.1156422

de Andrade, M. (2022). *Public health, humanities and magical realism: A creative-relational approach to researching human experience*. Routledge.

de Andrade, M, Barton-Wines, N, Bull, R., Campbell, L., Davis, S., Lowe, T., Marshall, A., Neilson, A., O'Hare, M., Raman, S., Rowe, S., Sachpasidi, C., Sanchez-Rodilla Espeso, C., Stenhouse, R. & Soweid, L. (2024). REALITIES in health disparities: Researching Evidence-based Alternatives in Living, Imaginative, Traumatised, Integrated, Embodied Systems. *Frontiers in Public Health*, *12*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2024.1391084

de Andrade, M. (2024). *Transcending Measurement: Creative Impact as "Currency" for Social Change*. https://creativeimpact.eu/en/articles/transcending-measurement-creative-impact-as-currency-for-social-change/

Deleuze, G, Guattari, F, & Massumi, B (2013). *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia / Gilles Deleuze and Fe´lix Guattari; translation and foreword by Brian Massumi*. Bloomsbury.

Dingle, G. A., Sharman, L. S., Bauer, Z., Beckman, E., Broughton, M., Bunzli, E., Davidson, R., Draper, G., Fairley, S., Farrell, C., Flynn, L. M., Gomersall, S., Hong, M., Larwood, J., Lee, C., Lee, J., Nitschinsk, L., Peluso, N., Reedman, S. E., … Wright, O. R. L. (2021). How Do Music Activities Affect Health and Well-Being? A Scoping Review of Studies Examining Psychosocial Mechanisms. In *Frontiers in Psychology* (Vol. 12). Frontiers Media S.A. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.713818

Driesch, H. (1914). *The History and Theory of Vitalism*. Macmillan and Co., limited. https://doi.org/10.5962/bhl.title.88054

Erickson, K., & Stull, D. (1998). *Doing Team Ethnography*. SAGE Publications, Inc. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412983976

Fernando, G. M. C., Wanigabadu, L., Vidanagama, B., Samaranayaka, T. P., & Kamal Chandima Jeewandara, J. M. (2019). "Adjunctive effects of a short session of music on pain, low-mood and anxiety modulation among cancer patients" – A randomized crossover clinical trial. *Indian Journal of Palliative Care*, 25(3), 367. https://doi.org/10.4103/IJPC.IJPC_22_19

Foot, J., & Hopkins, T. (2010). *A Glass Half-full: How an Asset Approach Can Improve Community Health and Well-being*. Improvement and Development Agency. https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/glass-half-full-how-asset-3db.pdf

Friedli, L. (2009). *Mental health, resilience and inequalities*. https://iris.who.int/handle/10665/107925

Götell, E., Brown, S., & Ekman, S.-L. (2009). The influence of caregiver singing and background music on vocally expressed emotions and moods in dementia care. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*, 46(4), 422–430. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijnurstu.2007.11.001

Guin, U. K. (1989). *Dancing at the Edge of the World: Thoughts on Words, Women, Places*. Grove Press.

Haraway, D. J. (2016). *Staying with the Trouble*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv11cw25q

Jundler, A., Espeso, C. S.-R., Campbell, L., McArthur, D., Rowe, S., Ulrichsen, S., de Andrade, M., & Stenhouse, R. (forthcoming). Ethical tensions: problematising the duality of the community embedded researcher identity in the REALITIES project. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods: Special Collection on Conflicts in Qualitative Research*.

Lahelma, E., Hynninen, P., Metso, T., Tolonen, T., Gordon, T., & Palmu, T. (2006). Collective ethnography, joint experiences and individual pathways. *Nordic Studies in Education*, 26(1).

Lassiter, L. E. (2005). *The Chicago Guide to Collaborative Ethnography*. University of Chicago Press.

Lassiter, L. E. (2019). Collaborative Ethnography. In *SAGE Research Methods Foundations*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036766518

Lemaire, J. B., Wallace, J. E., Sargious, P. M., Bacchus, M., Zarnke, K., Ward, D. R., & Ghali, W. A. (2017). How Attending Physician Preceptors Negotiate Their Complex Work Environment: A Collective Ethnography. *Academic Medicine*, 92(12).

Manning, E. (2013). *The Minor Gesture*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv111jhg1

Mansens, D., Deeg, D. J. H., & Comijs, H. C. (2018). The association between singing and/or playing a musical instrument and cognitive functions in older adults. *Aging & Mental Health*, 22(8), 970–977. https://doi.org/10.1080/13607863.2017.1328481

Martínez, F., Berglund, E., Harkness, R., Jeevendrampillai, D., & Murray, M. (2021). Far away, so close A collective ethnography around remoteness. *Entanglements: Experiments in Multimodal Ethnography*, 4(1). https://entanglementsjournal.org/far-away-so-close/

McLean, J., Mosteanu, O., Schei, T., de Andrade, M. & Currie-Brownie, C. (2025). Plenary Panel Discussion, Participation or Pretence? Mainstreaming Participatory Methods to Confront Bias, Power, and the Illusion of Objectivity in Evaluation Design. UK Evaluation Society Conference. Glasgow, 19-22 May.

North Lanarkshire Council. (2019). *The Plan for North Lanarkshire*. https://www.northlanarkshire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-10/The%20Plan%20for%20NLC%20v.3%20accessible.pdf

Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulos, A. (2016). Milieu, Territory, Atmosphere: New Spaces of Knowledge. In *Knowledge-creating Milieus in Europe* (pp. 79–95). Springer Berlin Heidelberg. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-642-45173-7_5

Roberts, L. (2025). Data in Focus: driving evaluation excellence. Keynote session, UK Evaluation Society. UK Evaluation Society Conference. Glasgow, 19-22 May.

Rodriguez-Garavito, C. (2024). *More than human rights: An ecology of law, thought and narrative for earthly flourishing.* The New York University: NYU.

Roelvink, G., & Zolkos, M. (2015). POSTHUMANIST PERSPECTIVES ON AFFECT. *Angelaki*, *20*(3), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969725X.2015.1065106

Sawyer, R. D., & Norris, J. (2012). *Duoethnography*. Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:osobl/9780199757404.001.0001

Sigaud, L. (2008). A collective ethnographer: fieldwork experience in the Brazilian Northeast. *Social Science Information*, *47*(1), 71–97. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018407085750

Simmons, B. (2018). The minor gesture. *Disability & Society*, *33*(3), 495–497. https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2017.1414323

St. Pierre, E. A. (2018). Writing Post Qualitative Inquiry. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *24*(9), 603–608. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800417734567

Travis, R., & Bowman, S. W. (2012). Ethnic identity, self-esteem and variability in perceptions of rap music's empowering and risky influences. *Journal of Youth Studies*, *15*(4), 455–478. https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2012.663898

Truman, S. (2019). Feminist New Materialisms. In *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Research Methods*. SAGE Publications Ltd. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526421036

Tuula, G., Hynninen, P., Lahelma, E., Metso, T., Palmu, T., and Tolonen, J. (2006). Collective ethnogrphy, join experiences and individual pathways. *Nordisk Pedagogik* 26, 3-15.

Uhlig, S., Groot, J., Jansen, E., & Scherder, E. (2019). Rap & Sing Music Therapy and sleep in adolescents: A single-blind cluster randomized controlled trial. *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, *28*(1), 60–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2018.1542613