

Guitar and Bass Guitar Players' Perceptions about Health and Well-Being:

A Phenomenological Exploration

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Guitarists and bass guitarists represent a large portion of the musician population yet little has been studied regarding guitarists' perceptions of health and well-being. Studies that have been conducted on guitar and bass players have focused mainly on the physical, musculoskeletal effects of playing the guitar and bass guitar. A few studies focused on the physical impact of playing an instrument also investigated the psychological health of musicians, but only limited to the context of playing-related injuries. The purpose of this qualitative study was to gain insight into how guitar and bass players perceived the effects that playing their instrument had on their health and well-being and the meaning that being a musician held for them.

The researcher utilized van Manen's (1994) hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the study. Fifteen participants voluntarily responded to a UMCIRB-approved study announcement that was distributed through on-line musician forums, online classified advertisement sites, word of mouth, and email invitations. Snow-ball sampling also yielded participants who were informed by study participants. The qualitative data was collected through one-on-one, in-depth interviews using an approved interview guide. The researcher collected qualitative data by means of one-on-one, in-depth interviews using an approved interview guide. The researcher transcribed all interviews verbatim and analyzed the data

through a system of reading of transcripts, coding data, concept map, and a thematic exploration of data as well as an analysis of data using van Manen's lifeworld existentials. The researcher also engaged in phenomenological reduction, including reflexivity, and maintained a multifaceted audit trail throughout the study. The perspectives of the study participants revealed an overarching theme of Music as Connectedness and four sub-themes: View of Self as Musician, Social Connection Through Playing Music, Communicating Through Playing Music, and Promoting Wellness Through Playing Music.

Findings from this study revealed participants' perceptions that playing the guitar or bass guitar was beneficial to their health and well-being, primarily through a process of connectiveness to self; musicians, including those with whom they played; and audiences with whom they shared their music. Perceived health benefits ranged from increased socialization which speaks to social connection, wellness promotion benefits through an increased sense of confidence, increased coping and stress-release skills, enhanced communication avenues as a result of playing music with and for other people, and an over-all sense of well-being.

Guitar and Bass Guitar Players' Perceptions about Health and Well-Being:

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Guitarists comprise a large and growing group of musicians who, like all musicians, are prone to musculoskeletal and other physical injuries related to playing their instrument as well as mental health issues related to being a musician (Fjellman-Wiklund & Chesky, 2006). Few research studies provide insight into the perspectives and experiences of non-professional but actively playing guitarists and bassists related to multi-dimensional health and well-being and the meaning that being a musician holds for them. Gaining such insight has implications for tailoring health education and promotion efforts to address non-professional guitarists' and bass guitarists' needs, to anticipate issues for those guitarists who become unable to play, and to provide support or, when necessary, to advocate for and serve as a resource for clinical treatment.

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the lived experience of non-professional musicians who were guitar and bass players and the meaning that health and well-being as well as being a musician held for them. This qualitative study was informed by hermeneutic phenomenology, described by van Manen as a means of better understanding and more enriching insight into lived experiences through the exploration of what the phenomenon being examined means to those that experience it (van Manen, 1990). A systematic review of the refereed literature on musicians' health, including the limited literature related specifically to guitar and bass player's health, revealed research that largely focused on the physical health implications of playing musical instruments. This study sought to expand insights into health and well-being from the perspective of guitarists and bass guitarists who were actively engaged non-professional musicians who played music with other musicians.

Background

Although mixed methods studies have investigated the experiences of musicians, few have focused on eliciting perspectives about musicians' health and well-being, particularly those musicians who were guitarists and bass guitarists. Moreover, the meaning that being a non-professional musician holds for guitar and bass guitar players, including those who played with other musicians, has received scant attention. A review of related studies revealed limited insight into the holistic effects that music and being a musician had on health and well-being. A number of studies have focused on the physical aspects as well as mental health consequences of playing an instrument, particularly for professional musicians or music students, but have not addressed the experiences of musicians who played non-professionally.

Significance of the Study

Guitar and bass players represent one of the fastest growing segments of musicians with over 1.6 million guitars sold in the year 2000 (Fjellman-Wiklund & Chesky, 2006). A 2006 University of North Texas Musician Health Survey by Fjellman-Wiklund and Chesky of 520 professional and non-professional guitar, bass guitar and banjo players revealed that high percentages of these musicians reported musculoskeletal problems related to playing their instruments. Of these self-identified musicians, 80% of guitar players and 77% percent of bass guitar players reported having one or more playing-related musculoskeletal problems. The respondents also reported issues related to fatigue, depression, headache, and eye strain that the researchers who conducted the study indicated were stress-related problems that posed a concern for the guitar community in general.

At the time of the current study, few qualitative studies had specifically investigated non-professional guitar and bass guitar players' perceptions about what being a musician meant to

them and how they perceived and experienced health and well-being. This study will be helpful to health educators and other health-related professionals in gaining insight about this population, including the risks and benefits guitarists perceived were associated with the avocational but active engagement in being a guitar or bass guitar player who played with other musicians.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines health as “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (World Health Organization, 1946). Consistent with a qualitative research approach, the current study explored health and well-being with an openness to a diversity of perspectives. Zander, Voltmer, & Sphan (2010), for example, investigated the integration of health promotion and prevention into an undergraduate music education curriculum. Their study revealed multiple views about what health and well-being meant to this particular group of musicians, with the physical effects of playing music accounting for only a part of the overall health picture. Schoeb and Zosso (2012) concluded that more knowledge was needed about how musicians understood their health as well as their bodies (Schoeb & Zosso, 2012). This study aimed to address this need.

In this study, the researcher sought to discover what being healthy and achieving well-being meant to guitar and bass players, while also gaining an understanding of how pro-health attributes could be encouraged in musicians by helping professionals including health educators. Consistent with Patton’s (2015) description of qualitative inquiry, the researcher sought to capture and understand participants’ diverse perspectives, while searching for patterns of behavior and thoughts and examining themes that arose from those patterns. The data from this study highlight guitar and bass player’s perspectives about health and well-being and being a musician, while providing insights for music and health educators regarding the promotion of

health and well-being among musicians. The insights gleaned through this study will also enable educators to tailor health education and promotion activities specifically to non-professional musicians who are active guitar and bass guitar players.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Musicians face a variety of health issues ranging from the physical impact of playing their instrument on their bodies, to mental health issues such as stress and performance anxiety that has been associated with playing music professionally. Guitar and bass guitar players have unique circumstances that contribute to their long-term health status, ranging from the impact playing has on their bodies to the mental toll and benefits that can result from playing and performing music (Zosso, & Schoeb, 2012). The purpose of this systematic review was to examine the published referred literature related to actively-playing, non-professional guitar and bass players. The researcher sought to address the meaning that participants derived from being a musician and their music-related perspectives and experiences, with a particular focus on health and well-being.

The most prominent affliction that particularly affected guitar and bass guitar players reported in the literature was focal dystonia, which impacts joint flexibility and can make playing difficult and painful (Lee, Eich, Ioannou, & Altenmüller, 2015). This condition also has psychological implications, which can affect musicians' confidence and level of stress. Guitarists and bass guitarists in particular also suffer from arthritis and tendonitis in their fingers, wrists, and elbows as well as in their upper bodies in terms of their shoulders, necks, and backs (Fjellman-Wiklund & Chesky, 2006). A study of music students concluded that the emotional impact of focal dystonia is greater among musicians than non-musicians (Kok, Vliet Vlieland, Fiocco, Kaptein, & Nelissen, 2013).

Pierce (2012), for example, proposed that, like athletes, musicians faced both physical and psychological health issues specific to their craft and emphasized a greater focus on musicians' wellness during the process of music education. Musicians in the reviewed studies

primarily experienced the physical impact of playing, such as musculoskeletal discomfort and focal dystonia.

Two studies in particular investigated a population of musicians currently performing in live settings regarding the physical effects of playing instruments (Manchester, 2009; Raeburn, Hipple, Delaney & Chesky, 2003). Findings from these cross-sectional (Raeburn et al., 2003) and mixed methods studies (Manchester, 2009) revealed that musicians experienced the physical consequences of playing music which increased with time playing their instrument. In addition, Manchester (2009) observed no correlation between age at which the individual started playing an instrument and onset of physical complications related to playing (Manchester, 2009).

In terms of physical aspects of playing music, research findings identified focal dystonia as a commonly experienced, task-specific movement disorder that caused a loss of voluntary motor control that was associated with psychological consequence (Lee, Park, Yoon, Kim, Chun, Aminata & Jeon, 2013). A study that examined professional musicians who had been seen by a physical therapist due to focal dystonia concluded that it is crucial that physical therapists understand the emotional needs of their musician patients as well as their physical needs during the treatment process for the disorder (Schoeb & Zosso, 2012).

A study conducted with 41 bass guitarists examined the association between posture and musculoskeletal complaints in professional bassists (Woldendorp, Boonstra, Tijlma, Arendzen, & Reneman, 2016). Results from this study indicated that professional bassists were likely to experience high levels of pain due to the physical demands of playing, but concluded that playing the bass guitar was not linked to poor posture.

A study of diseases or disorders suffered by musicians in general concluded that string players were prone to calluses on the tips of their fingers and rheumatologic symptoms due to

repetitive motion issues (Liu, & Hayden, 2002). Liu and Hayden also concluded that focal dystonia impacted musicians' ability to perform when they were well into their careers, with the left hand most likely to be affected (2002).

Another study conducted with 57 healthy musicians revealed that musicians were likely to cope with focal dystonia effectively and that having this neurological condition caused no measurable dissatisfaction with life even though playing caused them to experience pain (Lee, Eich, Ioannou, & Altenmüller, 2015). In addition, researchers found that participating musicians adjusted their professional goals and demands to cope with the condition of focal dystonia. Musicians in this study stated that the pain they experienced as a result of playing was not enough to cause them to stop playing their instrument and that they continued to play regardless of any discomfort.

In a qualitative study on focal dystonia, the researchers interviewed two musicians in an effort to investigate the professional, sociological, social, psychological and medical impacts of the condition from musicians' point of view. The researchers concluded that when the two study participants, a 26-year-old pianist, and a 27-year-old guitar player, understood the psychological effect that focal dystonia caused, they addressed these issues with healthcare providers specializing in both physical and mental health (Schoeb & Zosso, 2012).

In a research study that examined music students who played stringed instruments, including the violin, viola, cello, and contrabass, researchers reported a high prevalence of musculoskeletal disorders that ranged from 73.4% to 87.7% (Lee, Park, Yoon, Kim, Chun Aminata, Jeon, 2013). The researchers also evaluated diagnoses from 617 string instrument players who had visited a hand surgery center and found that 19% of the patients experienced mental and emotional consequences such as stress and anxiety from their injuries.

A cross-sectional study comparing illness perceptions between music academy students and a university medical center patients revealed that illness, injury and emotional concerns were significantly higher among musicians (Kok et al., 2013). The researchers stated that many musicians believed that pain was inherent in the level of performance they tried to achieve and attributed experiencing injuries to having inferior talent. They, therefore, viewed injury as being directly related to failure as a performer. The researchers concluded that musicians were more emotionally affected by their musculoskeletal complaints compared to non-musicians in the study.

The literature review revealed two studies that were specific to the health of guitar and bass guitar players. These studies focused on respondents' musculoskeletal health, general health, and playing-related injuries. Research utilizing a 15-question survey questionnaire completed by 261 professional, amateur, and student guitarists examined the musicians' primary anatomic location of pain (Rigg, Marrinan, & Thomas, 2003). The researchers determined that participants, regardless of professional or amateur status, all of whom played popular genres of music such as rock, blues, jazz and folk music, most commonly experienced pain in the fretting hand, followed by pain in their backs and necks.

Research conducted on professional musicians who performed for live audiences examined their perceived connection with audiences and how that connection colored their opinions of their performance experience (Geeves, McIlwain, & Sutton, 2016). This study included 10 Australian musicians ranging in age from 21 to 30 years, with three female and seven male participants. The musicians performed live music for an average of between two and five times per month. Their perceptions of audience connection were related not only to the relationship between themselves and the audience, but also to other musicians. This connection

was directly related to how well the musicians perceived their performances, thus influencing their perceptions of health after the performances. When these musicians felt connected to the audience and other musicians they were more likely to view their performance as successful. Their perceptions of connection then translated into a more positive post-performance state of mind.

Research that compared the mental health of orchestral musicians to that of physicians and aircraft manufacturers revealed that the mental health scores of musicians were significantly higher than both physicians and aircraft workers (Voltmer, Zander, Fischer, Kudielka, Richter, & Spahn 2012). A study of 320 musicians from a music academy, professional orchestra, bands and choirs utilized a questionnaire to examine the musician-instrument relationship. The results showed that the participants, regardless of what instrument they played or level of playing proficiency, overwhelmingly felt a direct connection with their instrument and that they were as one. As a result of this connection with their instrument, the participants in this study had lower levels of social phobia, performance anxiety, and felt more comfortable performing in front of audiences (Simoens & Tervaniemi 2013).

A self-report survey study on mental health utilizing a cross-section of 377 musicians in Australia's professional symphonic and pit orchestras examined social anxiety, performance anxiety, stress, depression and psychosocial well-being (Driscoll & Ackermann, 2014). The study compared age, gender, and the setting where they played their instruments to determine any connections between being a musician and anxiety-levels of the participants. The researchers identified a direct relationship between performing as a professional symphonic and pit orchestra musician with high levels of anxiety, substance use, and depression.

This literature review identified studies that investigated the health-related implications of being a musician. The studies focused primarily on musicians in general; few studies focused on the health and well-being of guitarists or bass guitarists. For musicians in general and guitarists and bass guitarists in particular, much of the literature focused on the physical health consequences of playing music, with implications of injury and the impact on mental health status. The findings of this review suggested a need for research that explored musicians' perceptions about their health and well-being and the meaning that being a musician holds for them. Studies that focus on guitar and bass guitar players specifically are warranted, particularly those that regularly play their instrument with other musicians but do so as an avocation.

CHAPTER III: RESEARCH METHODS AND DESIGN

The purpose of the study was to describe the perceptions and experiences of non-professional guitarists regarding being a musician and the meaning that being a musician holds for them. The researcher utilized a qualitative approach to explore the meaning and lived experience of musicians who play guitar or bass guitar. Phenomenology served as the theoretical approach for this study that was approved by the East Carolina University Medical and Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) (Appendix A).

In keeping with the tenants of hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher and participants served as collaborators in the study. A hermeneutic approach to phenomenology aligns well with this study since the researcher himself was a guitar and bass guitar player. The researcher was thus able to interpret data through a lens of shared experience, while also maintaining a nonjudgmental stance of empathetic neutrality and actively engaging in phenomenological reduction and bracketing. Bracketing, according to Patton (2015, p. 117), requires the researcher to set aside *“personal past knowledge, so that full attention can be given to the instance of phenomenon that is currently appearing in their consciousness.”*

Theoretical Description

Qualitative Research. Qualitative research is personal, illuminates meaning, studies how people and groups construct meaning, is interpretive, and seeks to find substantively meaningful patterns and themes (Patton, 2015). The researcher chose the qualitative approach of phenomenology and in-depth, one-on-one interviews to delve into the perceptions and real world experiences of the participants. This study aligned well with qualitative inquiry because it aimed to investigate the lived experiences of guitar and bass guitar players and sought to interpret meaning and gain insight into guitarists’ perspectives about health and well-being.

The researcher posed open-ended questions to participants, thus enabling him to uncover unanticipated data during the process of interviewing (Patton, 2015). He strived to get inside the phenomenon of interest in order to obtain detailed, descriptive data and perceptions about the variations in what goes on, and the implications of those variations for the people and processes involved (Patton, 2015) in being a non-professional guitarist. This was accomplished in this study through the researcher's total immersion in the data through interviewing each participant, transcribing each interview first-hand, and repeatedly reviewing the transcribed data. The researcher used an open-minded approach in conducting this study, while following where the data would lead.

Phenomenology. According to Swanson and Wojnar (2007), hermeneutic phenomenology is interpretive in nature and involves researchers in reflecting on their own past experiences, preconceptions and biases. An ongoing process of reflection and reflexivity, reflecting a process of becoming increasingly self-aware, enabled the researcher to more clearly access the understandings held by study participants. The researcher engaged in a photo-reflexivity process focused on his experience as a bassist and guitarist as preliminary preparation for conducting this phenomenological study. He continued to participate in reflexivity throughout the study via weekly journaling in a research log (Appendix B). In addition to participating in a photo-reflexivity process, prior to the study he was interviewed by a peer trained in qualitative research who used the interview guide prepared for the study. This experience provided the researcher with an increased awareness of his biases and assumptions, and enabled him to evaluate the format and effectiveness of the interview questions. Patton (2015) described qualitative research using the theoretical approach of phenomenology as a process of carefully and thoroughly documenting and describing how people directly

experienced a phenomenon such as, in this case, being a guitarist or bass guitarist. This study focused on how non-professional guitarists and bass guitarists perceived, described, felt about, and talked about being a musician (Patton, 2015). According to van Manen (1990) phenomenology involves participants' reflection on the lived experience of some phenomenon.

The researcher used van Manen's perspective on phenomenology as a guide for this study. Data collection focused on learning how participants described the meaning they associated with their lived experiences as musicians. Consistent with van Manen's perspective on hermeneutic phenomenology, the point of this phenomenological research study was to "borrow" guitarists' and bass guitarists' experiences, and reflections on their experiences to achieve an understanding of the deeper meaning or significance of an aspect of human experience (van Manen, 1990), that of being an avocational musician who played guitar or bass guitar with other musicians.

The researcher engaged in a thematic analysis of data that was consistent van Manen's (1990) guidance for identifying themes related to the research topic. The researcher repeatedly read the study participants' transcripts with an open mind to get a sense of 'what was going on' (van Manen 1990; 2006). The researcher transcribed the data, coded it, sorted the data according to codes, and created a code book (Appendix C). Ultimately, he analyzed the data with the aim of uncovering meaning. He analyzed and interpreted the data by constantly referencing the original and coded data and searching for meaning within the interview transcripts. In due course, he identified an over-arching theme and sub-themes that captured the meaning of the phenomenon he investigated (van Manen, 1990).

According to Patton (2015) gathering phenomenological data involved the researcher in undertaking in-depth interviews with people who had directly experienced the phenomenon of

being a guitar or bass player, and thus had lived experience with the phenomenon. The researcher conducted fifteen audio-recorded, in-depth individual interviews using an interview guide (Appendix D) that the researcher developed, guided by the following: the research question, the use of a phenomenological lens, and input from his thesis advisor and committee members. Each individual interview was conducted face-to-face, in a private, neutral setting with few distractions in order to ensure that the participant was comfortable and able to focus on the phenomenon of interest. The researcher pilot tested the interview guide by interviewing a guitar and bass player personally known to him. This process of developing and pilot-testing the interview guide served as a means of gaining insight into the effectiveness of questions included in the interview guide. Based on pilot test feedback and input from the thesis committee members, the researcher modified questions on the interview guide.

According to Patton (2015), qualitative inquiry depends on, uses, and enhances the researcher's direct experiences in the world and insights about those experiences while immersing oneself in another's world by listening deeply and attentively. The researcher practiced the art of active listening when interviewing participants, while also being aware of his biases. A process of active listening and a background as a musician allowed the researcher to quickly build rapport with participants.

The participants served as collaborators for this study by contributing their perspectives and experiences while they immersed themselves in reflection on the phenomenon of being a guitarist or bassist. The researcher's open-ended questions that were posed in a conversational manner and his prompts for further or more in-depth information sometimes led participants to offer unanticipated insights during the course of the interview. The dialogue that took place

between the participant and researcher was integral to the researcher extracting the meaning that being a guitarist or bassist held for the participants.

Credibility of the Study. Consistent with Patton's (2015) strategies for addressing the credibility of this study, the researcher employed techniques of triangulation, searching for disconfirming evidence, engaging in reflexivity, utilizing methods that were congruent with the research question and other elements of the study, and maintaining a detailed audit trail. The following procedures and processes contributed to the rigor of this research.

Triangulation was addressed through the inclusion of multiple participants: 15 guitar and bass guitar players from a wide variety of backgrounds. The different experiences that each of these musicians brought to the study was a product of purposeful sampling and resulted in a diverse cohort of participants, and participant perspectives. The researcher was diligent in his pursuit of self-awareness. During his thorough reading and re-reading of the transcripts, he kept an open mind towards patterns and trends that stood out as different or unique. His openness to disconfirming evidence was pursued throughout the entirety of this study.

A detailed audit trail was maintained by the researcher throughout this study with documentation of all steps, decisions, actions, and contacts made during the study. In addition to interview transcripts and informed consent documents, the researcher kept timely and detailed records of the following within a research log: thesis advisor and committee correspondence, reflexivity journal entries, and study timeline. The audit trail also consisted of a code book, concept outline, transcriptions, and the researchers' memorandums about the study. This audit trail helped to maintain consistency when recording data, enabled an external audit of the study process, and further added to the rigor of this study.

The researcher engaged in reflexivity from the conception of this study through to its completion. This was conducted through consistent entries into a research log which tracked the date of entry, topic of entry, thoughts and reflections on the entry, action items, and follow-up items. The breadth of information detailed in this research log helped the researcher to stay vigilant in his quest for self-awareness which included being mindful of his preconceptions, biases, and experiences as a musician who played the bass guitar.

Sampling

Sample recruitment. The researcher developed a study invitation to be used to recruit study participants. The approved invitation (Appendix E) was distributed online by means of email, postings on online message boards, and on an online classified advertisement website. Participants were also recruited through word of mouth and by snow-ball sampling which consisted of approved participants informing other potential volunteers about the study.

Participants were recruited for the study by means of word of mouth, snowball sampling, an online classified advertisement, and an announcement on an online bass guitar player forum. For the purpose of this study, snowball sampling refers to a participant who contacted the researcher after hearing about the study from a fellow musician who was selected as a study participant. Participants were encouraged to share the researchers' phone number and email address with fellow guitar and bass guitar players who indicated an interest in the study.

Of the 21 individuals who contacted the researcher about the study, the researcher planned to select the first 15 respondents who met the study criteria for participation in the study. When each potential participant initiated contact with the researcher by phone or email, the researcher then scheduled a date and time for a phone call to discuss the study expectations with the individual and to determine if the person met eligibility criteria for participation. If a phone

call could not be arranged, the researcher shared information about the study with the potential participant via email.

Sampling strategy. During the initial telephone or email contact with the researcher, potential participants were briefed about the nature of the study and encouraged to ask questions regarding participation. In order to ensure that the potential participants were well informed about the study, the researcher provided them with a brief overview of the study before the scheduled interview date and afforded them an opportunity to ask questions before they committed to participate. In the brief study overview, the researcher described the goal of the study, informed consent, identity protection, and confidentiality measures, the structure of the interview, details about participation, and researcher contact information, but did not include the actual interview guide.

The researcher pre-screened individuals interested in volunteering for study participation who contacted the researcher in order to affirm that they met established criteria for study participation. The following criteria was used to identify and purposively sample volunteers for study participation: a) English-speaking adults aged 18 years or older: b) self-identification as a guitar or bass guitar player: c) non-professional experience playing guitar or bass guitar with other musicians: and, d) residence within a 50-mile radius of a large metropolitan area in the state of North Carolina.

Sample size. As Patton (2015) acknowledged, no firm guidance existed for sample size in qualitative inquiry at the time of this study. Sample size depends on the purpose of the inquiry, what is at stake, what will be useful, what will have credibility, and what can be done with available time and resources (Patton, 2015). Data saturation can be explained as bringing in new participants into the study until the data set is complete, as indicated by data replication,

redundancy, or when no new data are being added (Marshall, Cardon, Poddar, & Fontenot, 2013).

In terms of sample size, a review of qualitative, phenomenological studies confirmed that 12 to 15 interviews were typically sufficient to produce meaningful, redundant data. In a commentary on the logic of small samples in interview-based qualitative research, Crouch and McKenzie (2006) stated that a researcher's close relationship with study participants occurred in less than 20 interviews. The researchers concluded that the primary goal of in-depth interviewing was to gain authentic insight into people's experiences, and that the labor-intensive nature of the interview process, justifies a small sample size. Similarly, in a study that investigated sample size and data saturation in qualitative studies conducted by doctoral students, Mason (2010) revealed that data saturation occurred with as few as 10 participants. In a qualitative study using a hermeneutic phenomenological approach that examined the lived experiences of nursing students, the researchers achieved saturation after interviewing 10 participants (Pollock, & Biles, 2016).

The researcher in the current study observed saturation after conducting 12 face-to-face interviews with participants. He assessed evidence of saturation during data collection, transcription of interviews, data coding, and theme discovery. Data saturation was confirmed by the researcher conducting three additional interviews in which no new data were elicited, thus affirming the existence of data saturation.

Setting. Consistent with the phenomenological literature, data collection for this study took place in a setting that was mutually comfortable and familiar to participants and which supported participant safety and the confidentiality of participants' data. Locations were determined through dialogue between the researcher and each participant to ensure the agreed

upon location met these criteria. The researcher conducted face-to-face in-depth interviews with all participants, with the interview process taking between 45 minutes to one hour in length. The interview duration afforded the researcher opportunities to ask follow-up or probing questions and to request that the participant elaborate further when needed.

Data collection. The researcher conducted all interviews for this study. The researcher's stance during the interviews was that of empathetic neutrality, an attitude of openness to participant's perspectives, an intention to actively listen (Patton, 2015), and interest in and respect for each participant's views (Heinonen, 2014). In keeping with the adoption of a phenomenological attitude of reduction, the researcher engaged in reflection and reflexivity in order to recognize and try to bracket or set aside his personal knowledge, experience, and preconceptions as a musician in general and bass guitarist in particular. He strived to "see" and gain insight into the phenomenon of interest from the participants' viewpoints while also being attentive to the potential influence of his own pre-existing knowledge and experience on participants and the research environment.

Prior to conducting an interview, the researcher reiterated the purpose and process of the interview with each participant and addressed the ethics of the study. He reviewed strategies to protect the identity of study participants, including removing all identifying information from the transcripts and written findings and the replacement of all real names with pseudonyms. After each participant read the study-specific informed consent document (Appendix F), the researcher addressed each participant's questions and concerns prior to the participant signing the document.

Immediately before initiating an interview, the researcher again affirmed the participant's permission for him to audio-record the interview and take hand-written notes, and reiterated

strategies to protect participants' identity and ensure the confidentiality of data. The researcher invited participants to honestly share their perspectives and reminded them that he sought to learn from them about the phenomenon of interest in the study. He shared with each participant that he had questions to ask of them, but also invited them to share information that they believed was important in addressing the focus of the study.

The pre-interview information that the researcher shared involved: a) thanking the participants for their involvement; b) describing the format of the interview and the nature and importance of open-ended questions; c) disclosing the approximate time required for interview participation; d) asking permission to audio record the interview and take hand written notes; e) informing the interviewee that audio files would be archived for three years in keeping with University guidelines, and f) informing participants that their responses were confidential and that their identity would remain anonymous.

The researcher used an interview guide that enabled him to address the research question. He engaged in active listening, including responding to participants' comments with prompts and probes intended to encourage more in-depth responses. Examples of prompts were; "can you elaborate on that?", "can you clarify what you mean by that term?", and "please tell me more about that." At the conclusion of each interview, the researcher summarized the key messages the participant had shared and invited participants to add or change information in order to more accurately reflect their point of view.

Transcription. The researcher personally transcribed the audio-recorded interview data verbatim within a 24-hour period after each interview was conducted. This process allowed the researcher to fully absorb the data and enabled his active listening during the interviews without the distraction of taking overly detailed notes. The verbatim transcriptions (Appendix G)

included all forms of participants' dialogue such as slang and pauses in cadence. Terms unique to the participant's vernacular were addressed by probing for clarification during the interview. Pauses, laughter, or other emotions were noted in the transcript; for example, he bracketed terms such as "laughs," "heavy-sigh," or "took a deep breath." The goal of the transcription was to accurately document the interview, while also creating a form of narrative data that was useful for detailed analysis.

Analysis of Data

The researcher wrote analytical memorandums to himself as he engaged in on-going data analysis during the process of data collection, transcription, and the more focused analysis process itself. In brief, the analytical process after transcribing the data involved checking the transcripts against the audio-recording, creating a codebook and coding the transcribed data using the codes that emerged from the data. After all interviews were completed, the researcher reviewed, categorized, and revised codes and sorted and retrieved the data by code. Ultimately, he identified categories, patterns, concepts, and themes that emerged from the data (Patton, 2002). A more detailed description of the analysis process follows.

Repeatedly reading each verbatim transcription enabled the researcher to become familiar with the data and to initially explore the meaning that the participants derived from being a musician who played guitar or bass guitar player. After reading the transcribed data, the researcher identified codes and developed a code book that enabled a consistent application of codes to the data. The researcher then sorted the data according to code and repeatedly reviewed the data within and across codes and reassessed and re-categorized codes. The researcher developed a concept outline (Appendix H) as part of the analytical process that illustrated data

patterns and connections and ultimately, after working extensively with the data, identified themes.

He examined the participants' data by utilizing hermeneutic phenomenological reflection, which ultimately provided insight into the essence of the phenomenon explored in this study. Van Manen's (1990, p. 77) process of phenomenological reflection involved the researcher in "*reflectively appropriating, clarifying, and making explicit the structure of meaning associated with the study participants' lived experience.*" In the case of this study, the lived experience was that of musicians involved in the avocational engagement of playing guitar or bass guitar as a member of a group of musicians who regularly played together. Consistent with van Manen's (1990) views about how to find the structure of the meaning found in the transcribed data, it was helpful to the researcher to think of the phenomenon described in the text as approachable. This was accomplished by the researcher engaging in reflexivity and analyzing the data through the lens of a musician as described by the participants. The process of identifying meaning was further facilitated through the thoughtful design of the interview guide and participant requirements, which were purposely designed to capture the lived experience of being a guitar or bass player. The purposeful reflexivity and multiple data touch points in the form of transcriptions, code book, and concept outline were built into this study with the researcher's intent to become fully immersed in the lived experience of the participants. It was through this immersion that the researcher was able to draw meaning from the data (van Manen, 1990).

The researcher employed a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts in the analysis of the data. Participants' structures of experience comprised the themes in this study. Van Manen (1990, p. 88) described themes as "*the needfulness or desire to make sense, the sense we are to make of something, the openness to something, and the process of insightful invention,*

discovery, and disclosure.” He asserted that a theme was the means to get a notion (idea), give shape to the shapeless, describe the content of a notion, and was always a reduction of a notion.

The researcher developed initial themes and refined them. In particular, the researcher’s interest was in the meaning that participants derived from the connection of playing their instruments and their health and well-being. It is through the lens of musician that the researcher examined the themes that emerged from this study.

Consistent with van Manen’s (1990) selective approach for isolating thematic statements, the researcher re-read the interview transcriptions looking for statements or phrases that seemed particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon of being a guitar or bass guitar player. As these statements and phrases revealed themselves within each interview transcription, the researcher highlighted, coded, and later compiled them into documents comprised of all similarly coded data. This step of the process was then repeated for each transcribed interview and across transcribed interviews until themes emerged. To decide if a theme had a universal or essential quality, the researcher relied on van Manen’s guidance for determining incidental and essential themes. In determining the universal or essential quality of a theme, the researcher’s concern was to discover aspects or qualities that made a phenomenon what it is and without which the phenomenon could not be what it is (van Manen, 1990).

Consistent with van Manen (1990), the researcher actively engaged in a process of free imaginative variation in which he sought to determine if a theme was integral to the phenomenon by asking the following question suggested by van Manen: “Is the phenomenon still the same if we change or delete this theme from the phenomenon?” Throughout the process of data analysis, the researcher actively compared emerging themes to its relevance to the lived experience of being a guitar or bass player. The researcher sought to determine if the themes were integral to

being a guitar or bass player and examined what the phenomenon would look like if a theme was taken out of understanding the phenomenon. In other words, the researcher consistently examined the possibility that the meaning of being a guitar or bass player would be perceived differently by the participants if the theme was not present.

Researchers' Reflexivity Engagement

As a long-standing, active bass guitarist who plays in a band as an avocation, the researcher met the criteria for participation in this study. Engagement in a process of reduction/reflexivity was thus a critical undertaking for the researcher in this qualitative study. The researcher's engagement in reduction/reflexivity involved being actively engaged in preparatory activities prior to data collection. Such activities included: a) writing a personal statement that revealed his personal perceptions about the health effects of music in his own life and b) having a colleague who had been trained in qualitative research conduct an interview with him using the interview guide that, with minor modifications, was ultimately used to interview study participants. During the study the researcher continued to engage in reduction/reflexivity by writing entries in a journal (Appendix I) at least weekly. He remained open to being challenged regarding his biases and assumptions by thesis committee members during the data analysis and writing process. Through these measures, the researcher sought to actively and persistently strive to become aware of his personal biases, assumptions, values and beliefs related to being a bass guitarist and to the health effects of being a musician.

Researcher Qualifications

At the time of this study the researcher was a graduate student in the Health Education and Promotion program at East Carolina University and had completed all prerequisite coursework for conducting a thesis. Preparation for the study included his successful completion

of both a qualitative research course and a research methods course prior to the start of this study. The researcher successfully completed the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in human research for Social/Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel (Appendix J) prior to beginning the study. The researcher's personal experience combined with a phenomenological lens created the foundation for this investigation of lived experience.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

In this research study the researcher used a qualitative approach to investigate non-professional guitar and bass guitar players' perceptions and experiences with a focus on their views about health and well-being and the meanings that playing music held for them. The researcher used a phenomenological approach to explicate the lived experience of 15 purposely sampled guitar and bass guitar players who regularly played music with other musicians as an avocation. Informed by hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher focused on obtaining deep understanding and rich insight into participants' experiences regarding the nature and meaning of, in this case, playing music, health, and being a musician (van Manen, 1990).

In this chapter, the researcher presents findings from an analysis of verbatim transcriptions of data that he collected by means of 15 audio-recorded, in-depth, face-to-face, semi-structured interviews with study participants. After describing the characteristics of study participants and the settings in which data collection took place, the researcher presents thematically organized study findings with study participants' quotations included as supportive evidence, and findings reflecting van Manen's "lifeworld existentials" of lived space, body, time and human relations.

Description of Participants

The 15 participants chosen for this study voluntarily initiated contact with the researcher by responding to word-of-mouth or emailed information about the study, announcements on an online musician forum, or study recruitment advertisements on an online classified advertisement website. Seven of the participants responded to online advertisements, seven were reached through word-of-mouth, and 1 participant through snowball sampling. Twenty-one initial potential volunteers met the participant criteria and agreed to take part in the study. They initiated contact with the researcher and were informed by the researcher about the purpose and

nature of the study by means of a phone conversation or a personal email. The researcher selected the first 15 people who met study inclusion criteria, voluntarily agreed to participate in the study, and read and signed the informed consent for study participation prior to initiating data collection. The researcher retained contact information on file about the remaining six potential participants in the event he needed more participants to achieve data saturation.

Study participants were self-described guitarists and bassists who regularly played non-professionally with other musicians. Nine participants identified as playing the guitar and six participants identified as playing the bass guitar; three participants reported playing both instruments, but identified one primary instrument that they regularly played. The participants comprised a homogenous sample in terms of male gender and Caucasian race. They were, however, diverse in age and length of time in years that they had played their guitar or bass guitar. The average age of the participants was 42 years, with the youngest being 29 years and the oldest being 71 years. The total length of time that they had played their instrument ranged from five years to 53 years with an average total duration of playing of 24 years. The average age the participants started playing their instrument was 16 years. The youngest age a participant initiated playing the guitar or bass guitar was age 12; the oldest age a participant began to play their instrument was 28 years. Two-thirds of the study participants started playing the guitar or bass guitar during adolescence.

Study Setting

The researcher conducted face-to-face, audio recorded interviews with participants that took place in a variety of public and private settings. Four interviews took place in coffee shops, five in restaurants, five in participants' work offices, and one interview took place in an empty band rehearsal studio. These locations were mutually agreed upon with the researcher's

stipulation that the location was conducive to having a private, uninterrupted conversation, and the site provided a safe environment for both the participant and the researcher. The ultimate decision of where to meet was each participant's choice.

Consistent with the principles of hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher's stance of openness to participants' views was facilitated by his engagement in reduction, reflection, and bracketing (epoché) in an effort to become aware of and set aside his preconceptions, biases, and assumptions. A process of continually returning to the original data helped the researcher identify themes drawn from participants' reported lived experiences of being a guitar or bass player. Such themes became apparent while the researcher guarded against any undue influence by his personal assumptions or biases or background as a musician. The tenants of hermeneutic phenomenology were diligently practiced by the researcher throughout the study.

Music as "Connectedness"

The "essence" (van Manen, 1990) or overarching theme that emerged from this study of guitarist and bass guitarist non-professional musicians was that of, "*Music as Connectedness.*" These guitarists revealed that playing music and the music itself forged a sense of personal identity as "musician." In addition to connections with self, playing music in groups connected them to one another, to their peers as players or listeners to their music, and to their audiences with whom they shared their music. Greg shared the following insight:

I think it gives you a sense of connectedness; there is a sense that music is a universal language. (Greg)

The overarching theme of "*Music as Connectedness*" encompassed four sub-themes: "*View of Self as 'Musician,'*" "*Playing Music as a Means of Connection,*" "*Communicating Through*

Playing Music,” and *“Promoting ‘Wellness’ Through Music,*” each of which will be discussed below.

View of self as “musician.” Participants experienced playing guitar or bass guitar as a key, decisive experience in their lives and, for several participants, an experience that was connected to their self-identity or that played a crucial role in the personal characteristics they developed in their lives. Wyatt, for example, spoke about learning to play and playing bass guitar as having had a profound influence on his life. Playing guitar was, in his words, *“extremely formative in my development as a person.”* He took it a step further as he explained his experience learning to play bass guitar in more detail:

I absolutely think that it is pivotal to my formative sort of experiences. A lot of things I have done in my life have prepared me to be good at what I do in some ways, and learning to play the bass is one of them. I think it is one of the many things that has built resiliency into my personality. (Wyatt)

Several participants described playing guitar or bass guitar as a key contributor to their fundamental view of themselves that they referred to as their identity. According to Simon,

I see it [playing bass guitar] as very sympathetic with my work, both roles are very supportive and I am kind of creating conditions for people to really shine. My personal identity and playing the bass, it is really inseparable. (Simon)

Daniel, too, described the connection of playing guitar to his identity by saying, *“It just becomes part of you, it becomes part of your personality, part of who you are.”* Wade asserted that playing guitar, *“is absolutely what I am and not what I do.”* Thus, some participants shared a view that being a guitarist or bass guitarist was part of their identity, inseparable from how they

saw themselves as an individual, while others attributed certain characteristics they developed in their lives such as resiliency to playing guitar or bass guitar.

Social connection through playing music. All of the participants spoke about the social benefits of playing the guitar or bass guitar, including the belief that playing their instruments connected them, not only with themselves, but also to the musicians who played with them, to the larger community of musicians, and to their audiences. Both Simon and Roger reflected on the opportunity to socially connect with others by playing music in a group with other musicians. They stated,

Ideally for me it's that supportive, building of relationships, and connecting with people, and connecting with the audience. (Simon)

Well you know I have met a lot of good people through playing guitar. By nature, being in a band is a collaborative, social event. (Roger)

Connections with other musicians and peers. Socially connecting with others was important to participants regardless of age. Seventy-two-year-old Evan spoke about his high school experiences playing guitar as part of a band and playing guitar at the present time. He acknowledged that playing guitar enabled him to feel connected with peers. He also recognized that the importance of social connections that occurred as a consequence of being a guitarist were even greater in older age.

In high school I was in an R&B band. My friends and I played in a band and it provided social connections and that's more important now than it used to be for me. (Evan)

For some participants playing guitar afforded them an opportunity to fit into a particular or desirable social group. Wyatt, for example, observed that guitar playing was a common activity among his college peers, thus easing his entry into a peer group since he, too, played guitar.

Half the people in my suite played guitar and so I started playing with them, I really started playing in the dorm room with folks and playing with friends. (Wyatt)

Daniel spoke about the social experience that playing guitar provided him, and how being a musician served as a catalyst in forging social relationships, particularly with musicians that he played with in a group.

It [playing guitar] ties very closely in with me to the relationships with people, not just every person but, to me, it's as much about jamming with other people, there is a big social aspect. I am one of those people you've heard of who has never met a stranger, musically it is the same thing. (Daniel)

Similarly, Nathan commented about how being a musician had facilitated his social relationships, particularly with people with whom he had music in common.

A lot of my friends play guitar, a lot of us were musicians, even if it was just noodling musicians or people who just like being around music, and so it is always something that has factored into my relationships with people. (Nathan)

Aaron appreciated the social benefits of playing music with other people.

It connects you with other people when you get to play with other people and to perform together. It is a profound experience, it is hard to even articulate, it's this deep connection to the music and to the meaning, and to each other. (Aaron)

Connections with audiences. In addition to the social context of playing with members of a group, participants described a sense of connection with audience members. Jack summed up perceived social benefits of playing guitar when he described playing live in front of an audience:

I think that is what is so beautiful about music, man. It can just bring people together in such a weird way. (Jack)

Another participant described the feeling of pleasure that he as a musician associated with an audience's connection with musicians and their music during a performance:

It is all great, like that dopamine release is happening when the crowd is into it and you are getting that feedback from the folks that are listening, that makes it 100 times better. (Wyatt)

The social benefits of playing in a live setting was, according to Simon, “*connecting with people, and connecting with an audience.*” Daniel enthusiastically described the feeling that came from playing live, and the audience was, “*enjoying it and giving positive feedback, which feeds the energy of the whole room, that's awesome!*”

In summary, participants perceived that the connections to people were facilitated by playing the guitar or bass guitar, including connections to other musicians, peers, and audience members. They described the benefits they found in the social context of playing music with

other people, and how playing guitar and bass guitar facilitated this interaction. They also spoke of the comradery that happens when musicians get together for the sake of playing music and that these experiences were meaningful to them.

Communicating through playing music. A characteristic of being a guitar or bass player, according to the participants, was the benefit of being able to communicate emotion through the playing of their instrument. This was perceived as a health benefit by some of the participants who felt able to use music to communicate emotions that they could not otherwise articulate. Aaron referred to this ability to communicate through playing music when he asserted that, “*Music is an outlet that connects us to things that are hard to otherwise say or articulate or express.*” Evan affirmed that he, too, appreciated the ability to communicate emotions through playing guitar that he had difficulties expressing in other ways.

The emotion that I didn't normally communicate, there is something about that, something in the soul that's there that you either communicate something or you get something out of. (Evan)

Greg suggested that it was the universal language of music that made it possible to communicate widely with human beings.

We would communicate on a human level through music and so, I think being a musician in the broadest sense of the word allows you to tap into a universal language that speaks, almost transcends the things that divide us. (Greg)

For Nathan, music as a form of communication was also a way for him to connect with other people. It provided the opportunity to, in his words,

Pull some emotion out and put it into this song, or soundscape, or atmosphere, through my instrument, through the song, that people can respond to. (Nathan)

The participants perceived that it was possible to express and receive emotion from others through the communication that music provided. Jack felt that he had an obligation and responsibility as a musician to communicate feelings that others might share, thus combating the isolation he or they might otherwise feel. He stated,

My only goal in music was that someone would hear something that I wrote and say 'Man, he feels like I do,' you know. To try and get this out there so somebody else can know, it's like a signal across space, it's like I am not alone. (Jack)

After playing a live show, Jack's goal was realized through his interaction with an audience member:

He came up to me when we were packing up and he was like 'hey man, that one song you were playing, I can relate to it, it really meant a lot to me, I have been through a lot man and it helps knowing someone else has been there too.' (Jack)

Jerry spoke specifically about the challenges of verbalizing certain emotions, but how playing music provided a medium to express these feelings.

There are some emotional things that don't really lend themselves to verbal expressions, there just aren't words for them. Playing allows for ways of expressing the intangible emotions. (Jerry)

Greg emphasized the theme of communication as it related to playing guitar, and how the activity of playing allowed for deeper communication between people, while connecting them using the language of music.

We would communicate on a human level through music and so, I think being a musician in the broadest sense of the word allows you to tap into a universal language that speaks, almost transcends the things that divide us. (Greg)

In summary, the study participants recognized that the opportunity to play the guitar or bass guitar enabled them to communicate with fellow musicians, audience members and others who listened to their music. Music as a means of communicating emotions or feelings that were difficult or impossible to verbally share was a valuable outcome of being able to play music with and for other people.

Promoting “wellness” through playing music. The data collected in this study indicated that there were multiple perceived benefits from playing guitar or bass guitar, including positive impacts on physical and mental health. These benefits ranged from increased self-confidence, sense of identity, and social connections, to perceived coping skills, therapeutic value, stress release, and a sense of overall health and well-being. Many of the participants spoke of the general benefits associated with playing music, but the consensus was that they found playing guitar or bass guitar an overall “*positive experience.*” According to two participants,

I think that the impact it has on me is very positive, I don't have a lot of negative experiences playing guitar, it is usually a very positive experience generally. (Aaron)

I don't know that I would say there is a bad experience; I think all of those moments were positive; it makes me happy you know? (Jack)

Consistent among all participants was a sense of fulfillment, accomplishment, and increased self-confidence associated with playing guitar or bass guitar. For the study participants, meeting the challenges of learning to play their instrument and their continuing efforts to improve their personal proficiency with their instrument typically led them to feel a sense of accomplishment and confidence. Participants perceived that the accomplishments they realized in learning to play and in playing guitar or bass guitar was accompanied by personal rewards of achievement, increased self-esteem, and providing or regaining, in the words of one participant, “*some confidence and some self-affirmation.*”

Self-Confidence. Study participants spoke of improvements in their self-confidence that they related to such accomplishments as learning to play a new or challenging piece of music or performing in front of other people. Jim affirmed that playing guitar, “*has always been a key part to me feeling better about myself in general.*” He spoke of being able to turn to his bass guitar during times of self-doubt to regain his confidence, stating:

Positively I feel like I can do anything and it reinforces that I can do this [accomplish difficult tasks such as learning to play the bass guitar] and continue on this path. (Jim)

One participant made the connection between the benefits of playing the bass guitar and how the lessons learned in his early experiences with learning to play his instrument applied to other aspects of life.

I think it [playing the bass guitar] encouraged me to keep doing what I was doing and push further, and not just with the bass, but in life. It gave me the confidence that I could learn this, I can do this. (Jim)

Stress Management. The participants in this study consistently referred to playing their instrument as a stress “release,” “escape,” or way to purge the troubles and manage the stress that they experienced in everyday life.

I need to come down and decompress. When I don't do it [play guitar], it just feels like I need a cleanse, like the toxins have built up, it's definitely the sort of thing that recharges me. (Wyatt)

Jim referred to playing guitar “*as a stress release, I play daily, it gives me something to focus my energy on,*” when he spoke of the need for regular practice and the opportunity that playing offered him in terms of relaxation. The benefits from emotional release reported by the participants varied but were consistently perceived as having positive effects on their health. The following participants offered insight into the positive health outcomes of playing their guitars or bass guitars:

It just kind of levels you out, it is a way to release, but it kind of gets your demons out, gets your stress out, it's a way of release. (Jack)

Emotionally you can get the release; it is such a good way to release tension. (Mitch)

It provides me with a way of escape, and a way to deal with stress. (Wade)

Jerry, a guitar player and singer/songwriter, explained how the process of writing and playing his music was an emotional outlet for him when he said, “*it is a way of channeling my emotions that keeps me sane and helps me deal with stress.*” Wade felt strongly that being able to play guitar was a way to detach from the stressors in his life.

It allows me to detach from anything that is going on in my life, my job, my other responsibilities, it allows me to detach, really disconnect, the whole ability to disconnect from the stresses, I can destress. (Wade)

Coping with Tough Times. Associated with participants’ health and well-being were study participants’ contention that playing the guitar or bass guitar was beneficial in helping them through difficult times in their lives. Jim spoke of how taking up the bass guitar during a particularly difficult time in his life provided him with a coping mechanism that enabled him to persevere during a challenging time.

Without it I don’t know if I would have been able to cope, the bass, again being able to focus my energy on something, just being able to focus on something other than how shitty I felt, really was integral to my getting well, it was vital. It was, pardon the pun, instrumental in helping me get through that time period. (Jim)

Jack simply said, “*honestly, I think it is the reason I am alive, it has kept me going,*” when he spoke of the connection between being able to play guitar and coping with a difficult period of his life.

Therapeutic Effect. For some participants, playing guitar and bass guitar held a therapeutic or healing benefit. Wyatt summed up this sentiment by saying, “*I can just sort of take a step back and I can take a deep breath, and really stop thinking about everything that*

stressed me out every day. It helps me find my center again.” Several participants acknowledged the therapeutic benefits that they felt playing the guitar had contributed to their mental and emotional health:

I think on some subconscious level, therapeutic in a way, it has been very significant to my mental health as well. (Jace)

It’s therapeutic for me, I started playing music as a therapeutic outlet, so from an emotional stand point it has been very beneficial. (Cliff)

Jack stated that he played guitar specifically for its health benefits. He contended that, *“I do it more or less for health man. . . . It’s cheaper than a psychologist.”*

Wholeness and Well-Being. The idea of wholeness and well-being as being directly related to health was a pattern that ran consistently through the interview transcriptions, particularly when the researcher asked participants about their definition of health. Evan described health in the following terms,

In my mind, I know that health is supposed to be a broader thing about having a wholeness and a wellness about you. It’s a wholeness model where people need to be maximized. (Evan)

Wyatt described health in the following way:

Health is about the quality of life that we are all able to lead, and it has sort of connections to the opportunities that we are afforded, our social condition, and so, you know I think of it in a really holistic way. (Wyatt)

The meaning that other participants associated with the term, “health,” also revealed perceptions of well-being, “*overall wellness, complete wellness,*” and wholeness as elements of being healthy. In addition, some participants identified dimensions of health that included one or more of the following: mental/emotional, physical, or spiritual health, with one participant suggesting the importance of, “*balancing your spiritual and mental*” health.

I consider health to be not just physical, it is emotional, it is spiritual, it is physical, all of those things. (Wade)

To be healthy is to be whole. You are not missing anything or not really wanting of anything. (Mitch)

Wyatt made the connection of his definition of health to the benefits he realized from playing the guitar in his comment that, “*I find that the next day [after playing] is a better day for me, I mean I sleep better.*” Simon related health to, in his words, “*excellence in all things*” and stated that he felt healthier when he played well because, “*I pride myself on delivering a polished product to the people.*” Jace simply stated that continuing to pursue playing guitar, “*is definitely better to keep it going for my health.*”

Daniel spoke of stamina as a measure of health as it related to playing live shows in front of an audience:

Stamina, the ability to just hang in there, and keep going, part mental and part physical health, but really the ability to keep going, so stamina is a big deal to me. I have been healthier when I was gigging [playing in front of an audience] regularly. (Daniel)

Jerry spoke to the benefit to his health his relationship with music has been, not only in terms of stress management, but also in terms of engaging in an activity that was meaningful to him.

So inasmuch as it has helped me deal with stress for my entire life, it is a really big factor in my overall health, I think. . . . You know mental well-being and feeling that you have accomplished something, that you are doing something that is useful and has value, that is huge. (Jerry)

Wade summed up the benefit that playing has had on his health when he commented,

All this [playing] has made me a much better person now, and it makes me more of a complete person. . . . From a health stand point, it [playing with better musicians] made me a better musician, and I think that in turn improves my health. I believe that. (Wade)

In summary, although participants perceived health in various ways, their perceptions that playing guitar or bass guitar had positive effects on their health were relatively consistent. All but one participant, who had experienced a recent playing-related “hand issue” one month prior to data collection, spoke positively of the effects of playing their instrument. The health benefits that participants referred to as beneficial included the ability of playing guitar to relieve stress, cope with difficult situations, and contribute to wellness, wellbeing, and holistic health.

Van Manen’s (1990) “Lifeworld Existentials”

The researcher referred to van Manen (1990) and his “Lifeworld Existentials” to guide his reflection and interpretation of the interview transcriptions. These Existentials include: lived space (spatiality), lived body (corporeality), lived time (temporality), and lived human relation (relationality or communality) (van Manen, 1990).

Lived space can have many meanings depending on setting and what lived experience is being investigated. In the case of this study, what was revealed as lived space came in the form of physical space; a participant's music room, practice or rehearsal space, and the stage in a performance facility. Each of these physical spaces was uniquely different and presented different emotions for the participants. For most of the participants, the stage presented an opportunity to perform, engage in social connections, and communicate emotions through music. They viewed these opportunities as generally positive to their health. One participant however, suffered from stage fright and perceived much more of a health benefit from his bands rehearsal space as he felt less pressure to perform in a practice setting. Several participants referred to times when they could be alone with their instrument and focus on playing and how this space in isolation provided them with much needed relaxation, which had an emotionally balancing health effect.

Lived body in regards to this study encompassed the relationship between mind and body through the act of playing the guitar or bass guitar. The participants spoke of the benefits and rewards of learning a new piece of music as well as playing with other musicians to create music. This connection between mind and body was evident throughout the conversations with participants. They regularly spoke about the positive aspects of engaging their minds through the act of playing their instrument. They also perceived stress release from playing as a positive health effect, with many of them specifically highlighting the sense of release they experienced due to playing and the therapeutic value they felt as a result of playing the guitar or bass guitar.

Lived time was a data-rich area that the participants referenced often. Many spoke of their journey as a musician and how the growth they experienced on their instrument was a source of confidence and self-esteem. This increase in playing prowess also brought with it an

increased sense of fulfillment for the participants, which they perceived as a health benefit. One participant spoke of how learning to play the bass guitar was formative in his development as an adult and that the supportive role of playing his bass guitar in a band has paralleled his role in his professional career.

Lived time can also refer to the actual time the participants spent playing their instrument as well as the experience of being lost in time when they played. The participants spoke about how the time they spent playing guitar or bass guitar allowed them to retreat from life and provided an opportunity to take a breath and disconnect from the rigors of daily life. This disconnection could be seen as a break in time, a period where the participants could solely focus on the task at hand without any interruptions or distractions. Many referenced how this time away from the stressors of life provided them with an opportunity to “*recharge*,” which they viewed as a health benefit. The consensus from the participants was that time spent playing the guitar or bass guitar, in whatever lived space, was time invested in their health.

The lived human relation health benefits perceived by the participants were also consistent throughout the data. Participants referenced the friendships they developed through playing the guitar or bass guitar as unique and long-lasting. These relationships were not only with other musicians but with audience members as well. Many participants spoke about the bonding through music that occurred when playing with other musicians as well as the connections made with the audience during performances. One participant talked about the way that music, and playing music, connected people and how playing music with other people, and in front of people as a group, was a profound experience. Also referenced by participants was social acceptance, social acclimation, connectedness to other people, and the way music could

bring people together. These social connections were perceived by the participants as having positive health benefits.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Discussion

Guitar players, bass players, music instructors, health educators, health promotion practitioners and others can look to these study findings for an exploratory examination of the lived experiences of 15 guitarists and their perspectives towards health and well-being. This study provided insight into the meaning associated with being a non-professional musician and how being a musician related to and was connected with, the perceptions that the participants had regarding health. The phenomenological nature of the study design enabled the researcher to investigate the lived experience of being a guitar or bass player and explored how this lived experience related to the health and well-being of the participants.

The participants interview transcripts revealed an overarching theme of “Music as Connectedness,” as well as four distinct sub-themes related to playing the guitar or bass guitar; View of Self as Musician, Social Connection Through Playing Music, Communicating Through Playing Music, and Promoting “Wellness” Through Playing Music. From the perspective of the participants, these themes were directly connected to their sense of overall health and well-being. The data from this study suggested benefits of being a musician including: a boost in self-confidence and connectedness with self as a consequence of playing their instrument, social connections provided with other musicians and for various audiences, the ability to communicate with self and others through music, and the well-being these musicians experienced as a result of playing the guitar or bass guitar.

Overview of Study. The goal of this study was to explore the lived experience of non-professional guitar and bass guitar players who play with other musicians as an avocation. In keeping with the tenants of hermeneutic phenomenology, the researcher and participants served

as collaborators in the study. A hermeneutic approach to phenomenology aligned well with this study due to the fact that the researcher himself is a guitar and bass guitar player, which allowed the data to be interpreted through a lens of shared experience. The researcher, however, maintained a nonjudgmental stance of empathetic neutrality while engaging in regular reflexivity to ensure a non-biased assessment of the data. This reflexive approach allowed the researcher to set aside his own perceptions and experiences as a bass guitarist in order to create openness to the participants and their perspectives on being a guitar or bass guitar player.

Guitar and bass guitar players who met pre-determined criteria were recruited to participate in an open-ended interview that explored perceptions about being a musician and health as well as the meaning that being a musician held for them. Methods to recruit participants included an online musician's forum, advertisements on an online classified website, and word of mouth. Based on previous phenomenological studies that utilized qualitative interviews to collect data, it was determined that up to 15 interviews would be needed to achieve data saturation. Although a total of 21 guitar and bass guitar players agreed to participate in the interviews, the first 15 volunteers were invited to participate in the study. The researcher conducted audio-recorded interviews using an interview guide and transcribed the interviews verbatim within 24 hours of each interview. Data saturation was achieved at 12 interviews and confirmed by three additional interviews in which no new perspectives were shared.

The researcher analyzed the data both thematically and by coding interview transcriptions, identifying patterns in the data, and ultimately documenting themes associated with the data. In addition, he analyzed the interview data according to van Manen's (1990) four Lifeworld Existentials of lived space, lived body, lived time, and lived human relation.

Discussion of findings. Previous studies of musicians have focused primarily on the physical effects of playing a musical instrument, particularly for professional or student musicians. Few studies, however, have examined regularly playing, non-professional guitarists perspectives about being a musician, the health implications associated with playing their instrument, and the meaning that playing music held for them.

In terms of the physical effects of playing their instruments, guitar and bass guitar players who participated in a former study by Fjellman-Wiklund and Chesky (2006) indicated that as guitarists or banjo players, they experienced arthritis and tendonitis in their fingers, wrists, and elbows. These disorders affected not only their ability to play their instrument, but also their perceived level of self-confidence. One participant in the current study revealed a physical disorder that he described as a “hand problem.” Much like the other participants in the study, he did not relate his level of self-confidence in general to not being able to play his instrument. The connection between a physical disorder that impacts non-professional musicians’ ability to play guitar or bass guitar and their self-confidence is currently unclear and warrants further study.

In research on professional musicians who had been treated by a physical therapist for playing related issues, the physical therapists acknowledged that in order to treat the patient in a holistic manner, understanding the emotional needs of their patients was integral to the treatment plan being administered (Schoeb & Zosso, 2012). This finding corresponds with findings in the current study that revealed that participants’ experienced more stress when they were not able to play their instruments on a regular basis.

A study of musicians who played string instruments and who had hand surgery for issues related to playing their instruments, revealed that 19% of these musicians experienced mental and emotional consequences such as stress and anxiety from their injuries and subsequent,

related medical procedures (Lee et al., 2013). A similar study comparing non-musicians and music academy students found that the musicians were more emotionally affected by the musculoskeletal issues they experienced than non-musicians (Kok et al., 2013). These findings were consistent with the experience of one study participant in the current study. As a consequence of suffering from a playing-related hand issue at the time of data collection, the participant expressed concern about not being able to play in the present and how the injury would impact his guitar playing in the future.

A previous study on professional musicians who performed for live audiences revealed that the participants perceived that their connection with the audience was an indicator of how well they played their instruments (Greeves et al., 2016). All the participants in the current study spoke about the benefits of connecting with audience members and how they perceived that this connection made the live performance a better and more memorable experience. No participant mentioned, however, that their personal excellence in playing their instrument was associated with how effectively they connected to audience members who listened to their music.

A mental health study of professional musicians that examined social anxiety, stress, depression and psychological well-being indicated that there was a direct relationship between playing performance and anxiety (Driscoll & Ackerman, 2014). Results of the study conducted by Driscoll and Ackerman (2014) revealed that perceived negative performances were related to anxiety, substance use, and depression. These results were not supported in the current study findings which explored the perspectives and experiences of non-professional musicians. Participants in the current study indicated that they felt less stress and anxiety when they played in a performance setting and that they valued and enjoyed connecting with the audience. Although one participant in the current study consistently experienced anxiety when playing

music in front of audiences in general, the participants in this study did not disclose any degree of personal stress and anxiety while playing music nor did they relate personal stress and anxiety to how well they played their instrument during a particular performance. Instead, participants expressed enjoyment or satisfaction with the possibility of connecting with and communicating with an audience through music. It is possible that the experiences of professional musicians in terms of perceived stress and anxiety may differ, perhaps markedly, from musicians who play regularly but who do so in a non-professional context.

Investigations of the mental health effects of being a musician have been primarily conducted in the context of the physical impact of playing an instrument. Specifically, such studies addressed the emotional impact of suffering a physical injury or condition that was typically related to playing an instrument and that prevented playing or caused pain while playing the instrument. The current study researched non-professional guitarists' perceptions about health and well-being. Study participants' perceptions consistently focused on overall health, well-being, and wellness, with a particular emphasis on the mental health dimension of health. The participants expressed positive mental health benefits of playing an instrument in the form of stress relief, emotional release, the ability to communicate with others through music, the social connections made through playing guitar or bass guitar, and a general sense of well-being they gained from playing music. The musicians in this study were actively playing and, with the exception of one participant, did not reveal physical injury or concerns related to playing their instrument. Their overall perception of the experience as, "music as connectedness," directly underscores the contribution that playing guitar or bass guitar made to their mental health through the social and emotional support that they derived from the activity.

Study Limitations. Although these findings highlight the health benefits of being a musician, the participants in this study represented a small sample of guitar and bass players from concentrated, metropolitan areas of North Carolina. Despite the variety of techniques used to recruit participants, those who participated consisted of a narrow demographic representation of musicians that was limited to male Caucasians. Their ages ranged between 29 and 71 years. This study identified participants' views at one point in time for each participant, thus their perspectives may be susceptible to change as they age and develop themselves as musicians.

Implications for Health Education and Promotion. The implications of this research are that the non-professional guitarists who voluntarily participated in this study perceived significant health advantages associated with playing their instrument that may be applicable to other non-professional guitar or bass guitar musicians. The study participants revealed that being an active guitarist was particularly advantageous in fostering valued social affiliations with the musicians with whom they played and the audiences who listened to their music. They also revealed that playing music promoted a connection with themselves, while also offering them a means of nonverbal expression. The findings from this study suggest that health educators, music educators, and musicians themselves could benefit from insights shared by these participants in considering the importance of playing music as an avocational activity in people's lives. Those who shared their views in this study underscored the importance of playing music, especially in the areas of self-expression, stress management, and social support. The findings would potentially be useful in increasing awareness about the benefits of learning to play the guitar or bass guitar to future musicians and people who, regardless of age, may consider learning to play an instrument.

The views of participants in this study also suggest that musicians such as avocational guitarists who play regularly with others may face significant challenges when guitar playing is not possible for them due to health-related or other reasons. An awareness of the potential magnitude of loss experienced by such individuals may be helpful in facilitating their recovery. Conversely, participants' lived experiences has revealed the multifaceted value of being an actively engaged musician and may be motivational in prompting former guitarists to return to play or to use playing their instrument as a therapeutic or coping tool. The guitarists in the current study did not mention injury prevention during the open-ended interviews in which they engaged. It may be valuable for health promotion professionals to explore strategies to increase non-professional guitarists' awareness of potential playing-related injuries, the measures that may be helpful to them in injury prevention, and other strategies they might undertake in the interest of health promotion.

Recommendations for Future Studies. This initial exploratory study of a specific group of non-professional but regularly engaged musicians has touched the surface of an area that has not been studied in depth. Study findings revealed similarities among these purposively sampled non-professional musicians regarding their perceptions about the effects that being a guitar or bass player has had on their health. The study highlighted aspects of playing the guitar or bass guitar and being a musician that previous studies have not focused on or revealed. Future studies are warranted that expand upon this research to include a wider geographic reach as well as a greater diversity of participants, particularly in terms of gender and race or ethnicity. Further study is needed to investigate physical injury prevention perspectives and practices among non-professional musicians who play musical instruments in general, and guitar or bass guitar in particular. The principles and methods of this study could also be applied to musicians

that play instruments other than the guitar or bass guitar. Moreover, a need exists for further research that focuses on the lived experiences of non-professional musicians who are unable to play their instruments due to injury or other problems and the coping strategies they employ when unable to engage in playing music.

Summary and conclusions

This phenomenological qualitative study explored the lived experience of 15 guitar and bass players and their perceptions about health and well-being and the meaning that being a musician held for them. The essence of this study was that guitar and bass players felt connected to themselves, each other and other musicians, and to audiences through playing music. This connectedness manifested itself in four ways: musician as self, social connection through playing music, communicating through playing music, and playing music as a means of realizing personal health and well-being. There were numerous consistencies in the data related to playing guitar or bass guitar and the participant's perceptions of the positive effects of playing their instrument on their health. The participants found that playing their instrument became an integral part of themselves, including contributing to positive feelings of self-confidence, their development as an individual, and their self-identity, and related these and other attributes to being healthy and living a well-balanced life.

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APPENDIX A: UMCIRB STUDY APPROVAL 12/7/2016

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY
University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board Office
4N-70 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682
600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834
Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · www.ecu.edu/irb

Notification of Initial Approval: Expedited

From: Social/Behavioral IRB
To: [Rodney Hipwell](#)
CC: [Sharon Knight](#)
Date: 12/7/2016
Re: [UMCIRB 16-002214](#)
Guitar and Bass Guitar Player's Perceptions about Health and Well-Being

I am pleased to inform you that your Expedited Application was approved. Approval of the study and any consent form(s) is for the period of 12/7/2016 to 12/6/2017. The research study is eligible for review under expedited category #6, 7. The Chairperson (or designee) deemed this study no more than minimal risk.

Changes to this approved research may not be initiated without UMCIRB review except when necessary to eliminate an apparent immediate hazard to the participant. All unanticipated problems involving risks to participants and others must be promptly reported to the UMCIRB. The investigator must submit a continuing review/closure application to the UMCIRB prior to the date of study expiration. The Investigator must adhere to all reporting requirements for this study.

Approved consent documents with the IRB approval date stamped on the document should be used to consent participants (consent documents with the IRB approval date stamp are found under the Documents tab in the study workspace).

The approval includes the following items:

Name	Description
Hipwell_IRB_Consent_Form_ECU.doc	Consent Forms
Hipwell_IRB_Interview_Guide_2.docx	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Hipwell_Thesis_Proposal_IRB.docx	Study Protocol or Grant Application
IRB_Flyer_Invite.docx	Recruitment Documents/Scripts

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: RESEARCHER'S RESEARCH LOG EXCERPTS 8/24/2016

Date	Topic	Thoughts/Reflections	Action	Follow-Up
8/24/2016	<p>Dr. Knight phone call to discuss progress and Fall semester planning.</p> <p>-Goal of semester is to</p> <p>1) present and defend proposal, 2) Submit IRB.</p> <p>-Relate data findings to literature: different? Similar?</p> <p>-Dr. K food for thought: "Is there a piece of music that captures for you, who you are as a musician?"</p> <p>What a great question!</p>	<p>-Can I combine a phenomenological study with an auto-ethnographic study?</p> <p>-How do I not let my own experiences as a musician creep into how I interpret and present the data?</p> <p>-Allowing reflexivity to happen without it biasing the results or presentation of the data collected.</p> <p>-Being totally immersed in what the interviewee is saying and disconnecting from self, using active listening to actually <i>hear</i> what the interviewee is saying.</p> <p>-These interviews/conversations should allow for space (active listening) between the notes (question and answer).</p>	Update systematic review; send to Dr. K for review/feedback.	<p>Start rough outline of methods (chapter 1): revisit research question, think about interview questions, how many people will I interview?</p> <p>-Triangulate data.</p> <p>-Think about where I could present this information?</p> <p>Health conference?</p> <p>MSPH students?</p> <p>Music classes at CU?</p> <p>-"Include music to help facilitate the presentation". Provide soundtrack for presentation or use music at various points.</p>
12/15/2016	3 rd Interview: bass and guitar player	<p>This subject had a much deeper history with playing and had experience playing bass in a band setting.</p> <p>This subject did an excellent job of explaining how his experience as a musician, and</p>	Transcribe interview.	12/16 Interview transcribed.

		<p>learning/playing the guitar and bass, parallels, and influences how he carries himself and processes information and relationships within the settings of his career. It was interesting to see how playing in a band, and live in front of an audience is so similar to working in teams, and heading meetings and presentations. The subject and I work for the same “company”, in the same department and I found the perspective the subject shared mirrored my own within the workplace. I am especially excited to see what themes emerge from the forthcoming interviews and how they align with the insight gained through this interview.</p>		
1/21/2017	Code Book	<p>Started work on the initial code book and coding transcripts today. I felt a tad awkward at first but I think I got the hang of it and was able to get through 3 transcriptions. This is not a quick process but I am still a month ahead of schedule.</p>	<p>Sent Dr. K. the initial version of my code book for review, hope to hear back from her soon.</p>	<p>Continue to develop code book through re-reading transcriptions.</p>

APPENDIX C: RESEARCHER'S CODE BOOK 2/26/2017

Date	Code	Code Description	Inclusions	Exclusions
1/28/2017	AFFI	Affirmation	Affirmation built as a result of playing guitar or bass.	Not affirmation gained through other activities.
1/21/2017	BAND	A band or artist.	Any professional band or artist that the participant references as part of their musical story.	People known to the participant that were influences. (see INFL)
1/21/2017	BRN	Brain.	Mental stimulation health benefits from playing an instrument or listening to music.	Not overall health benefits. (see THWB)
1/21/2017	BTE	Blow to ego.	A single negative event that happened during the participants playing experience that threatened their confidence.	Multiple events that occurred that effected participant confidence.
1/24/2017	CHAL	Challenge.	The challenge of playing the guitar or bass.	Not the challenges of playing with others, forming a band etc.
1/21/2017	COM	Communicate.	Participant references being able to communicate feelings or emotions through playing they can't communicate through other ways.	Not communication with other musicians. Not a musical connection with other people or musicians.
2/25/2017	COMP	Competency	Participant appreciates that they can play their instrument well. Indicates a level of instrument mastering.	Not playing a good show or compliments/affirmation from others.
1/21/2017	CONF	Confidence.	Confidence built as	Not confidence

			a result of playing guitar or bass.	gained through other activities.
1/21/2017	FAM	Family Connection to Music.	Exposed to music by family members.	Music, not playing guitar or bass guitar. (See INFL)
1/21/2017	FIRINS	First instrument.	The instrument the participant' first played.	Not necessarily the participant's first guitar or bass guitar.
1/24/2017	FRUS	Frustrated.	A participant states that they get frustrated when they don't get to play guitar or bass for a period of time.	Not when a participant is frustrated because they cannot learn a song or skill on the guitar or bass. (see CHAL)
1/21/2017	INFL	Influenced by another guitar or bass player or musician that the participant knew or knows personally.	Individual personally known by the participant that influenced/inspired them to play guitar or bass.	Seeing or hearing someone else playing who the participant didn't personally know.
2/26/2017	LIS	Listen to music.	Listening to music from a musician's perspective. Dissecting the song parts. Active listening while paying careful attention to detail. Engaged listening.	Casual listening. Background music. Passive listening.
2/3/2017	NEG	Negative	Any negative impact/effect of playing guitar or bass guitar.	Not a beneficial aspect of playing guitar or bass guitar.
2/3/2017	POS	Positive	Any positive impact/effect of playing guitar or bass guitar.	Not a detrimental aspect of playing guitar or bass guitar.
1/21/2017	REL	Release.	Participant refers to a stress release from playing guitar or bass. A	Not listening to music but being involved in playing an

			decompression from the stressors of life through playing.	instrument.
2/26/2017	SAVE	Saved	Participant states that playing guitar or bass “saved them” from an ideal life situation. Playing guitar or bass provided a healthy coping mechanism.	Not listening to music but being involved in playing an instrument.
1/21/2017	SOCON	Social Connections	Participant refers to a social benefit of playing guitar or bass with other people.	Excludes references to friendships outside of being a musician.
1/21/2017	SOL	Solo	Playing guitar or bass by oneself.	Not playing guitar or bass with anyone.
1/21/2017	THER	Therapeutic	Participant refers to act of playing guitar or bass as therapeutic, with a positive health effect.	Limited to the act of actually playing guitar or bass.
1/21/2017	WHID	Who I am. Identity.	Being a guitar or bass player is part of who the participant is, helped form them into who they are. Formative. Identify as a musician.	Someone who does not consider being a guitar or bass player part of who they are as a person. Do not identify as a musician.
1/21/2017	WWB	Wholeness or Well Being	Participant references a sense of wholeness or well-being as a definition of health.	Not in reference to playing. (see THWB)

APPENDIX D: STUDY INTERVIEW GUIDE 12/8/2016

Interview Guide

Introduction points to conduct immediately prior to the interview process:

- Thank you for participating in this study examining perceptions that guitar and bass guitar players have about the meaning, and health effects of music.
- This interview will include several open-ended questions that have no right or wrong responses.
- I am interested in learning from you and I am interested in your story and perspectives.
- This interview will last approximately 60 minutes.
- Your responses are confidential and they will remain anonymous—all identifying information will be changed when the interview is transcribed.
- As researcher/interviewer, my commitment to you as a participant is respectful interaction, and active listening. The information you share will be stored on my password-protected computer. I must save all information related to the study for a period of at least three years.
- The researcher will seek publication of this research study in professional journals and lay magazines and presentation of the study at professional conferences.

Participant pre-interview questions/procedures:

- Would you like to participate in reviewing the written findings of this study for the purpose of assessing if your experience and perspectives has been represented?
 - If yes, how would you like to be contacted? (email, phone)
- Is it acceptable that the researcher (I) audio-record the interview and take brief hand-written notes?
 - If yes, turn on the recorder at that point.

Interview Guide

- **Please tell me the story of your choice to play guitar/bass guitar?**
 - How long have you have played?
 - Under what circumstances do you play now?
- **Can you describe what is has it been like for you to play guitar/bass guitar?**
 - Early experiences?
 - Current experiences and how those compare to early experiences?
 - Typical time spent practicing or playing every week?
- **What is your definition of the word musician?**
 - Can you tell me more about that? An example?
 - Do you consider yourself a musician?
- **What does being a musician mean to you?**
 - How do you see the relationship between being a musician and your personal identity?
 - How would you describe your relationship with music?
 - In what way does music fit into your life?
 - How does playing music/being a musician reflect who you are as a person?
- **In your opinion, what is the meaning of the word, “health”?**
 - Example?
- **What impact has playing guitar/bass guitar had on your health?**
 - Physical?
 - Mental / emotional?
 - Spiritual?
 - Social?
- **Please describe how you feel when you do not play your guitar/bass guitar for a period of time.**
 - What is the period of time before you experience a change?
- **To the extent that you feel comfortable doing so; Tell me about your worst experience with playing the guitar/bass guitar?**
 - What, if any, effect on your health or well-being did that experience have?

- **Tell me about your best or most memorable experience with playing the guitar/bass guitar?**

- What, if any, effect on your health or well-being did that experience have?

*Use follow-up questions to summarize, clarify and confirm an understanding of the responses.

APPENDIX E: RESEARCH STUDY ANNOUNCEMENT



Interested in participating in a study on guitar and bass guitar players?

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the perceptions that guitar and bass guitar players have about and health and well-being and their role as a musician. My name is Rodney; I am the researcher for this study, and a graduate student at East Carolina University currently pursuing a Master's degree in Health Education and Promotion. I am also a bass player in a Raleigh based band.

The study will involve you in an audio-recorded open-ended interview with me that will take about an hour and a half of your time at an agreed upon location that is convenient to you. There is no cost to you to participate. I will ensure you anonymity as a participant in this study.

Although your response to sharing your perspectives and experiences cannot be anticipated, as a result of participating in this study you may find yourself reflecting on the topic and developing greater awareness about your own perspectives regarding your health and well-being and being a musician.

If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to contact me at hipwellr14@students.ecu.edu or 910-299-6711

I am happy to answer any questions or concerns you may have about the study and explain in detail the structure, goals and focus of this research.

Thank you for considering taking part in this study,

Rodney



Title of Research Study: Guitar and Bass Guitar Players' Perceptions about Health and Well-

Being Principal Investigator: Rodney Hipwell

Institution, Department or Division: East Carolina University College of Health and Human

Performance Address: Carol Belk Building, Greenville, NC 27858

Telephone #: 252-328-4630

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

You are invited to participate in a research study examining the perceptions that guitar and bass guitar players have about their role as a musician and health and well-being. My name is Rodney Hipwell, I am the researcher for this study, and a graduate student at East Carolina University currently pursuing a Master's degree in Health Education and Promotion. You have been selected as a possible participant because you meet the following criteria:

- a) English-speaking adult aged 18 or older
- b) Self-identification as a guitar or bass guitar player
- c) Non-professional experience playing guitar or bass guitar with other musicians
- d) Self-identification as a musician
- e) Residing within a 50-mile radius of a large metropolitan area in the state of North Carolina

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

I anticipate that this study poses no potential risks to you. In the event that you are uncomfortable answering any questions, simply state that this is the case and the interviewer will move on to another question. You may stop participating in the interview at any time.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You can choose not to participate.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at a location agreed upon by the participant and the investigator. The total amount of time you will be asked to volunteer for this study is 75 minutes.

What will I be asked to do?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked participate in an in-depth, open-ended interview. The face-to-face interview will be conducted at a location that is mutually agreed upon by you and me. The interview will take approximately one hour to complete. With your permission, I will be taking hand-written notes during the interview and, with your permission, audio recording the interview.

You will be asked the following questions:

- **Please tell me the story of your choice to play guitar/bass guitar?**
 - How long have you have played?
 - Under what circumstances do you play now?
- **Can you describe what is has it been like for you to play guitar/bass guitar?**
 - Early experiences?
 - Current experiences and how those compare to early experiences?
 - Typical time spent practicing or playing every week?
- **What is your definition of the word musician?**
 - Can you tell me more about that? An example?
 - Do you consider yourself a musician?
- **What does being a musician mean to you?**
 - How do you see the relationship between being a musician and your personal identity?
 - How would you describe your relationship with music?
 - In what way does music fit into your life?
 - How does playing music/being a musician reflect who you are as a person?
- **In your opinion, what is the meaning of the word, “health”?**
 - Example?
- **What impact has playing guitar/bass guitar had on your health?**
 - Physical?
 - Mental / emotional?
 - Spiritual?
 - Social?
- **Please describe how you feel when you do not play your guitar/bass guitar for a period of time.**
 - What is the period of time before you experience a change?
- **To the extent that you feel comfortable doing so; Tell me about your worst experience with playing the guitar/bass guitar?**
 - What, if any, effect on your health or well-being did that experience have?
- **Tell me about your best or most memorable experience with playing the guitar/bass guitar?**
 - What, if any, effect on your health or well-being did that experience have?

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Participation in the study will provide insight that can allow health educators and other health professionals to positively impact the lives of guitar and bass guitar players. Although your response

to sharing your perspectives and experiences cannot be anticipated, as a result of participating in this study you may find yourself reflecting on the topic and developing greater awareness about your own perspective

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research.

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me? ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- The principal investigator: Rodney Hipwell
- The thesis committee members consisting of three East Carolina University Faculty Members: Dr. Sharon Knight, Dr. Michele Wallen, and Dr. Jennifer Matthews.
- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

The researcher will retain all collected information related to this study including audio recordings, interview notes, interview transcriptions and related study material, on his password-protected computer hard drive, which will be locked in a file cabinet at his home in Angier, North Carolina when not in use. The information will be destroyed a minimum of three years after completion of the study. All identifiers such as participant names, will be removed from any collected data and pseudonyms will be used in the place of participant names.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 910-299-6711, days, between 9am and 5pm Eastern Standard Time.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the Office of Research Integrity & Compliance (ORIC) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director of the ORIC, at 252-744-1971.

Are there any Conflicts of Interest I should know about?

There are no potential Conflicts of Interest with this study.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)

Signature

Date

Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above, and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)

Signature

Date

APPENDIX G: TRANSCRIPT EXCERPT 12/19/2016

Interview Transcript

Investigating Guitar and Bass Guitar Players' Perceptions about Health and Well-Being

Interview Site: Caribou Coffee

Interviewer: (I) Rodney Hipwell

Interviewee: (S) Jim (pseudonym)

The following is a transcription of the interview conducted by Rodney Hipwell, Thesis Researcher for the study of: *Investigating Guitar and Bass Guitar Players' Perceptions about the Health Effects of Music*, of Jim. This interview was conducted on Monday, December 19th 2016, from 11am to 11:40am, at Caribou Coffee.

I: Please tell me the story of your choice to play bass guitar?

S: So growing up my whole family are musicians, my mom and my dad both played, my mom plays piano, my dad plays any stringed instrument but electric guitar specifically, we were allowed, we were encouraged to play whatever we wanted. My sister played guitar and piano, my brother is a classical cellist, and I wasn't interested. I just didn't, I was into sports, I just didn't want to play at all, and later on, about 5 years ago, I had a drug problem, I got in trouble, as I was actually a police officer and I got in trouble and I was at a tough point in my life and I decided, I always loved music, and I decided to I wanted to know, I was tired of not knowing how the sounds were being made and my brother had a bass guitar so I borrowed it from him and that's why I started bass, I just borrowed the bass from him, and I just started playing and that's how, it was, pardon the pun, instrumental in helping me get through that time period.

I: So how long have you have played the bass guitar?

S: 5 years

I: Ok. Under what circumstances do you play now?

S: As a hobby, as a stress release. I play daily, I try to play for at least a half hour a day, but if I have time more than that, it's, I play daily to keep up with, as a hobby but I am not great, but I still want to be proficient and it's fun, and since I don't gig, I am not a professional there is still a lot to learn, and every time I pick it up I learn something new, I just play out of the love of playing it.

APPENDIX H: CONCEPT OUTLINE 2/28/2017

- 1) Sense of Self: View of Self as Musician
 - a. Belonging
 - i. Part of a bigger picture
 - b. Self-Awareness
 - i. Integral to self-development
 - c. Identity
 - i. Defines who I am: musician
 - d. Fulfillment
 - i. Sense of accomplishment
 - e. Competence
 - i. Learning the instrument or piece of music/song
 - f. Confidence
 - i. I can do this
 - ii. encourages abilities
 - g. Validation
 - i. The accomplishment of playing
 - ii. Confirmation from other musicians
 - iii. Confirmation from audiences
 - h. Identity
 - i. Connection
- 2) Connection: Social Connection Through Playing Music
 - a. Belonging
 - b. Other Musicians
 - i. While playing music
 - ii. Universal bond with other musicians
 - c. Audience
 - d. Music
 - e. Fulfillment
 - i. Sense of accomplishment
 - f. Self-Awareness
 - g. Identity
 - h. Non-Verbal
 - i. Sense of Self
- 3) Communicate: Communicating Through Playing Music
 - a. Non-Verbal
 - b. Express emotions
 - i. Otherwise difficult to express
 - c. Fulfillment

- i. Sense of accomplishment
 - d. Self-Awareness
 - e. Identity
 - f. With other musicians and audience
- 4) Well-Being: Promoting “Wellness” Through Playing Music
 - a. Competence
 - i. Learning the instrument or piece of music/song
 - ii. Performing in front of an audience
 - b. Confidence
 - i. Learning the instrument or piece of music/song
 - ii. Performing in front of an audience
 - c. Validation
 - i. Learning the instrument or piece of music/song
 - ii. Performing in front of an audience
 - d. Holistic
 - i. Genuine feeling of well-being
 - e. Release
 - i. A way to disconnect
 - ii. Stress relief
 - f. Therapeutic
 - i. A way to disconnect
 - ii. Stress relief
 - iii. Exercise the mind/body relationship
 - g. Mental Stimulation
 - i. Exercise the mind/body relationship
 - h. Fulfillment
 - i. Sense of accomplishment
 - i. Self-Awareness
 - i. Formative in development as a person
 - j. Identity
 - i. Formative in developing sense of self
 - ii. Defines “who I am”
 - k. Express emotions
 - i. Otherwise difficult to express

APPENDIX I: RESEARCHER'S REFLEXIVITY JOURNAL EXCERPTS

Date	Topic	Thoughts/Reflections
5/30/2016	Phone call with Dr. Knight. Narrowed down current topic to: <u>What role does music play in your life?</u> Came to this after speaking with my thesis advisor and friends who are musicians and have PhDs (have done thesis or dissertation work)	Thinking about using a <i>phenomenology</i> (<i>what is the meaning of the lived experience of this phenomenon for the group(musicians) and/or autoethnography (How does my experience being a musician offer insights into this culture/way of life)</i>) approach.
6/5/2016	Clarify research topic as: Investigating the health impact of music in the lives of musicians. Clarify initial research question as: What role does music play in your life?	Thinking about follow-up questions. Asking myself these questions and reflecting on what music means to me and its role in my life, to how I listen to music, how I feel when time passes without engaging with music, specifically playing bass or guitar.
6/6/2016	Possible research question: What are the perceived health benefits that practicing musicians have about the role of music in their lives?	Still working on framing the main research question/topic to highlight the desired study outcome: health impacts of music on a musician's life.
6/10/2016	Phone call with Dr. Knight: discussed literature review specifics, reflexivity journal and research design.	Cover on literature review: populations studied, data collection strategy, conclusions of study and study methods. How does reflexivity cause implications for questions.

6/16/2016	<p>Clarify research topic as: Investigating the positive health impact of music in the lives of musicians. Clarify initial research question as: What are your perceptions as a practicing musician of the positive health related role of music in your life?</p>	<p>Expanding on how a musician views/listens to/absorbs music and how the presence of music is related to a well-balanced, healthy state.</p>
6/17/2016	<p>Per Dr. Knight suggestion tweak research topic to: Investigating the health effect of music in the lives of musicians. And tweaking research question to: What are the perceptions of practicing musicians about the health-related role of music in their lives?</p>	<p>Although there were not articles in my search that were exactly based on this research topic, there were some that were applicable. I found studies that used methods similar to what I am thinking about which was reassuring.</p>
7/16/2016	<p>Updated literature review:</p>	<p>Need to be aware of my biases as a musician who plays bass and guitar when considering narrowing down the parameters of inclusion. Leaning towards Acoustic guitarists, electric guitarists and electric bassists.</p> <p>Be on alert not to let my experiences as a bassist influence the direction of the study.</p>

APPENDIX J: RESEARCHER'S CITI CERTIFICATION

COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM) COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT*

* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details. See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** Rodney Hipwell (ID: 5000300)
- **Email:** hipwellr14@students.ecu.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** East Carolina University (ID:316)
- **Institution Unit:** Health Education
- **Phone:** 910-299-6711

- **Curriculum Group:** Human Research
- **Course Learner Group:** Group 2.Social / Behavioral Research Investigators and Key Personnel
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course

- **Report ID:** 17022703
- **Completion Date:** 26-Aug-2015
- **Expiration Date:** 25-Aug-2018
- **Minimum Passing:** 70
- **Reported Score*:** 97

REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY	DATE COMPLETED
Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction (ID: 1127)	26-Aug-2015
History and Ethical Principles - SBE (ID: 490)	26-Aug-2015
Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE (ID: 491)	26-Aug-2015
The Federal Regulations - SBE (ID: 502)	26-Aug-2015
Assessing Risk - SBE (ID: 503)	26-Aug-2015
Informed Consent - SBE (ID: 504)	26-Aug-2015
Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE (ID: 505)	26-Aug-2015
Research with Prisoners - SBE (ID: 506)	26-Aug-2015
Research with Children - SBE (ID: 507)	26-Aug-2015
Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE(ID: 508)	26-Aug-2015
International Research - SBE (ID: 509)	26-Aug-2015
Internet-Based Research - SBE (ID: 510)	26-Aug-2015
Vulnerable Subjects - Research Involving Workers/Employees (ID: 483)	26-Aug-2015

For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.

Verify at: <https://www.citiprogram.org/verify/index.cfm?verify=e93c631f-eaf8-41e8-97e9-3b24ef2502e2>

CITI Program Email: support@citiprogram.org **Phone:** 888-529-5929
Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

APPENDIX K: METHODS OF LITERATURE REVIEW

Although some studies have addressed the mental health of musicians, the majority of research related to musicians primarily focused on their physical health and the physical health consequences of playing their instruments. The refereed literature revealed study findings that encompassed a wide variety of musicians, including orchestra musicians, professional and amateur musicians, music program students, and musicians from various countries, backgrounds and age groups. Due to a dearth of literature pertaining specifically to guitar and bass players, the researcher used keywords to address these specific musician groups. Excluded from this review was research literature related to musicians who were solely vocalists.

The research strategy involved the researcher initially reviewing literature databases accessed through the East Carolina University library during the month of July, 2016, with continued literature review throughout the study. The researcher chose Scopus and ProQuest for this research due to the focus of these databases on health and health outcomes. Initial keyword searches consisted of the following terms: musician health: musician mental health, musician well-being, role of music in musicians lives, life balance of musicians, music mental health, music contentment, and qualitative study music musicians. The results from this search yielded literature that focused primarily on physical health although not specific enough to guitar and bass players to represent this demographic. Secondary keyword searches were conducted due to the initial lack of results on guitar and bass players using the following keywords: guitarist health, guitar player health, bassist health, and bass player health.

