

## ARTICLE

# Musical creation laboratory as an environment for free expression: An ethnographic observation of creative dynamics

Luciene Mourige Barbosa<sup>ID</sup> and Luciano da Costa Nazario\*<sup>ID</sup>

Department of Art and Culture, Federal University of Rio Grande, Rio Grande, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil

## Abstract

This ethnographic study investigates creative dynamics in a musical creation laboratory at the University of Rio Grande, Brazil. Data collection was obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted after the accomplishment of free improvisation activities. The research focused on the testimonies of 10 volunteer musicians, emphasizing the expectations, transformations, and reflections present in their narratives. The findings highlight how emotional experiences shape musical expression, revealing the transformative role of creativity in both individual and collective artistic practices. The study revealed that the process of creative freedom was deeply influenced by the participants' emotions. These emotions, when experienced and expressed, reflected meanings and reinterpretations in how they perceived and positioned themselves both artistically and socially.

**\*Corresponding author:**  
Luciano da Costa Nazario  
(lucianonazario@furg.br)

**Citation:** Barbosa LM, Nazario LC. Musical creation laboratory as an environment for free expression: An ethnographic observation of creative dynamics. *Arts & Communication*. 2025;3(2):4782. doi: 10.36922/ac.4782

**Received:** September 6, 2024

**Revised:** October 7, 2024

**Accepted:** October 23, 2024

**Published online:** November 7, 2024

**Copyright:** © 2024 Author(s). This is an Open-Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons AttributionNoncommercial License, permitting all non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

**Publisher's Note:** AccScience Publishing remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

**Keywords:** Creativity; Music; Education; Anthropology; Ethnography; Emotion

## 1. Introduction

*Why do people create?* This question leads us to explore the mysteries of human creativity, a phenomenon that transcends cultural, temporal, and disciplinary boundaries. Creativity can be seen as an act of bringing something new into existence or giving new meaning to something. It is a process involving the combination of existing elements, resulting in new products, ideas, or experiences. However, creativity does not occur in isolation; it is deeply influenced by cultural, social, psychological, and emotional factors. Culture is expressed and shaped by language, and creativity reflects the genuine needs and experiences of individuals.<sup>1</sup> Creation, connected to the concept of bricolage, reorganizes existing cultural elements to generate new meanings.<sup>2</sup> The act of creating is closely tied to the state of “flow,” in which a balance between challenge and skill leads to a sense of pleasure and fulfilment.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, creativity can manifest in various ways, depending on different intelligences and individual contexts.<sup>4</sup> Creativity is always emergent,<sup>5</sup> and in a musical context, creation is a process that balances innovation and tradition, functioning as a culturally situated practice. Music, as a form of collective expression, conveys values, histories, and identities, establishing a continuous dialog between a group's past and present.<sup>6</sup> In addition, musical creation often arises as an emotional response to life experiences, serving as a way to process and express not only emotions but also feelings, both individually and collectively. Feelings and emotions

are not merely physiological or psychological phenomena, nor are they left to chance or individual initiative. Their manifestation and bodily expression follow conventions that, while similar to language, remain distinct. Emotions emerge from a conscious or semiconscious evaluation of an event by individuals who respond according to their own sensitivity.<sup>7</sup>

Extensive research in musical literature has explored the role of emotional factors in creative environments, revealing that emotions play a crucial role in shaping creative expression and collaboration.<sup>8-10</sup> However, a recent systematic review by Peters *et al.*<sup>11</sup> highlights the scarcity of high-quality empirical studies specifically addressing how music-making affects emotional regulation. While emotional and psychological support is recognized as vital for fostering creativity,<sup>12</sup> the anthropological dimensions of emotional and creative experiences remain underexplored in music research, with the study conducted by Ruth Finnegan on music, experience, and the anthropology of emotion being cited as one of the few references on this subject.<sup>13</sup> This gap in understanding points to a broader perspective on creativity. More than just generating something novel, the act of creation also involves reinterpreting and assigning new meanings to existing elements. Creativity is not an isolated individual effort but a collective cultural phenomenon that both reflects and transforms society. Emotional factors, intertwined with these processes, not only influence personal expression but also shape the shared cultural manifestations that emerge through music.

In this context, the aim of this study is to investigate the multifaceted nature of human creativity, with a focus on its anthropological and emotional dimensions. The article explores how the act of creation reorganizes existing cultural elements to generate new meanings and how emotions and life experiences contribute to this process. The study was conducted by the Research Group on Musical Creativity at the Federal University of Rio Grande, Brazil, an interdisciplinary team of researchers in music, psychology, and anthropology. The ethnographic research focused on the testimonies of musicians who participated in a musical creation laboratory at the university, highlighting the expectations, transformations, and reflections present in their narratives.

## 2. Where and how does creation happen? The methodological approach

### 2.1. The musical creation laboratory

The musical creation laboratory is a pedagogical and research initiative that collects in-depth data on creativity through participants' musical performances. This approach

facilitates detailed insights, as participants share their ideas and beliefs on various topics related to musical creativity during the practices, allowing researchers to gather more comprehensive data than would otherwise be possible. According to Victor Turner, creative environments often emerge in flexible, playful settings, free from rigid routines.<sup>14</sup> This aligns with the design of the musical creation laboratory, which promotes free expression and experimentation by departing from traditional music education practices. The laboratory emerged from research centered on creativity in music<sup>1</sup>, founded on freedom as the driving force of creative development. Like Turner's idea of "interstitial spaces," the laboratory aims to create a relaxed and interactive environment where people can freely explore different musical aspects of themselves, as well as their emotions, thoughts, behaviors, values, beliefs, and experiences. The laboratory also encourages intuitive learning, allowing participants to expand their creativity in a flexible, open space. Activities follow a workshop-style approach, using modern pedagogical practices and musical languages explored by contemporary composers. Rather than a strict method, this approach is seen as a flexible process, acknowledging that it is impossible to control every aspect of creative work.<sup>15</sup>

In this sense, the activities in the laboratory focus on music education, distinguishing themselves from non-reflective teaching that merely transmits content related to tradition and culture. Music education in the laboratory promotes reflection as an integral part of the learning process, where the learner is not a passive recipient of information but a co-creator, building knowledge through engagement. Music is valued not only for its professional aspects or its role in socialization but, above all, for its function as a facilitator of expression, communication, and human sensitivity.<sup>16</sup> Music education goes beyond preparing individuals for music; it prepares them for life through music, encouraging constant reflection throughout the teaching-learning process.

Musical creation workshops are deemed experimental, as they do not follow the traditional practices used in music schools. By encouraging creative freedom, the workshops allow participants to experiment with different forms of expression, tools, and techniques, without the pressure of adhering to established norms or models. Participants are not required to read musical scores, as is typical in traditional methods, especially in classical music, nor are they bound by theoretical models or limited content, as seen in approaches based on prior knowledge of popular music

<sup>1</sup> Research titled "Freedom as a Trigger for Musical Creativity" – developed at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG), Brazil, by the Pro-Rectorate of Extension and Culture.

(read the interview with José Nunes Fernandes at the Hotel Ambassador, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 1992).<sup>17</sup> These premises indicate that the pedagogical and experimental approach of the musical creation laboratory, aligned with the creative spaces described by Turner, demonstrates that freedom and openness to experimentation are fundamental to fostering creativity and developing reflective individuals, connected to both themselves and the world around them. The laboratory focuses on promoting open and collaborative creative processes, encouraging personal exploration and musical innovation through specific activities coordinated and facilitated by the researcher in the field of music. In each session, participants sit in a circle to promote equality and the direct exchange of ideas without hierarchies. This arrangement allows everyone to see and hear one another equally, fostering open and collaborative dialog. Within this context, specific activities were designed to stimulate creativity and individual expression among the participants. These activities include:

- (a) *Improvisation on pre-established harmony.* This marks the participants' first encounter with the researchers. The activity allows for the assessment of their musical knowledge by observing how they develop creations using pre-established material – a shared musical element. Participants are encouraged to improvise both individually and in pairs
- (b) *Creative stimulation.* Creative stimulation is explored through musical duets between the researcher and each participant. Both researcher and participant improvise together, resulting in a spontaneous and collective work, where the researcher seeks to integrate into the participant's musical discourse, engaging in a musical dialog. A unique feature of this activity is that it is performed in complete darkness
- (c) *Inventive genesis.* This activity focuses on rediscovering sounds and tapping into the participants' "inner child." They are encouraged to explore collective vocal improvisation, percussion instruments, body percussion, and household items, allowing for rhythmic and timbral exploration that transcends conventional musical instruments
- (d) *Free expression.* An improvisational activity in which participants respond sonically to each other's suggestions, similar to a sonic conversation. The goal is to develop dynamic interactions until they reach a consensus on the piece's conclusion
- (e) *Sound situations.* In this activity, participants explore various soundscapes by improvising soundtracks for genres such as drama or suspense, without seeing the corresponding videos. Their performances are recorded, manipulated by the researcher, and integrated into the original soundtracks, leading

to a surprising experience when they hear their improvisations as background music for the videos. The goal is to create a specific sound ambiance, using learned resources to generate an atmosphere based on meanings internalized by the group.<sup>18</sup>

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured interviews, and the interpretation follows the principles of qualitative research. The participants were singers and musicians playing instruments such as the saxophone, guitar, drums, piano, bass, and percussion. The volunteers were informed about the objectives of the research and signed a consent form that had been previously approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Rio Grande (No. 70890823.5.0000.5324). All activities were documented through video and audio recordings. Personal names were omitted to preserve the anonymity of the participants.

## 2.2. Exploring creativity in music: An ethnographic approach

Ethnography, a practice of detailed observation and description of cultures, stands out for offering deep insight into cultural and social dynamics. Geertz<sup>19</sup> describes ethnography as a "dense description," where ethnographers who immerse themselves in the complexity of cultural meanings, aiming to interpret and translate often intricate practices and behaviors. Moreover, ethnography is more than just data collection; it represents theory in action, where theory and empirical evidence are inextricably intertwined.<sup>20</sup> This concept is extended into the field of music by Anthony Seeger, who argues that musical ethnography goes beyond superficial documentation to investigate how music is conceived, created, and experienced within a specific cultural context. Musical ethnography involves detailed writing about the various ways of making music, based on transcriptions and detailed descriptions, and often draws on personal experience or fieldwork.<sup>6</sup>

The musical creation laboratory, held at the Federal University of Rio Grande (FURG) in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, from October to December 2023, in the musical practice rooms of the Musical Extension Nucleus (NEMUS), offered an ideal setting for applying this ethnographic approach. With 10 participants from various instrumental backgrounds, the laboratory aimed to explore musical creativity through a series of group activities. This creative environment was structured to foster artistic expression and experimentation, aligning with Geertz's view of art as a complex and multifaceted cultural manifestation.<sup>19</sup> The ethnographic approach in the laboratory enabled the observation of how emotions and social interactions influence creative perception and

practice. Participants underwent a process of self-discovery and reflection, which was central to their experiences. Ethnography revealed how the collaborative environment and group dynamics unlocked new levels of expression and confidence, highlighting the importance of emotions in the development of musical creativity.

### 3. Results and discussion

#### 3.1. Expectations and transformations: The influence of emotions on personal and musical experiences in the musical creation laboratory

Le déclenchement des émotions est nécessairement une donnée Culturelle tramée au coeur du lien social et nourrit par toute l'histoire du sujet. Elle signale aux yeux des autres une manière personnelle de voir le monde et d'être affecté par lui.<sup>2 7(p.96)</sup>

The musical creation laboratory offered participants a rich experience in personal and artistic development, highlighting significant transformations in their musical perceptions and practices. In this context, the central role of emotions is emphasized, following David Le Breton's perspective on the anthropology of emotions. Interpretations of the participants' experiences will be grounded in this perspective, exploring how emotions shape their musical perceptions and practices. Le Breton argues that while sensory perceptions and emotions may seem like reflections of an individual's deepest intimacy, they are, in fact, strongly influenced by social and cultural factors. Furthermore, he notes that feelings and emotions are not universal states but vary according to the social and cultural context of each group or individual.<sup>7</sup>

Before the first activity, the researchers were introduced, and group members briefly shared their musical backgrounds. When initially asked about their perceptions of creativity, those who identified as creative explained their views in terms of their ability to express themselves artistically in various forms, reflecting Howard Gardner's perspective on creativity as a skill that manifests in diverse ways and contexts.<sup>4</sup> On the other hand, some participants who did not perceive themselves as creative attributed this to factors such as personal blocks, insecurities, and limitations imposed by sheet music. These testimonies highlighted the complexity of creativity, showing that it is not only an innate trait but also a trait shaped by life experiences and specific contexts.

The participants' experiences in the musical creation laboratory reveal significant personal and artistic

transformations, which can be grouped into three key themes: overcoming emotional blocks, redefining musical identity, and the role of group dynamics in creative development. These themes, grounded in both participant narratives and theoretical perspectives, offer a nuanced understanding of how emotions and social interactions shape the creative process.

##### 3.1.1. Overcoming emotional blocks

Participants entered the laboratory with various emotional challenges, such as fear, insecurity, or creative inhibitions, which initially acted as barriers to their engagement in the activities. However, the laboratory's supportive and emotionally safe environment allowed them to transcend these blocks and explore their artistic potential.

For instance, Singer 1 entered the laboratory expecting a highly technical and intimidating environment. She expressed her fear of performing in front of others, stating, "I could never sing in front of many people because I was always very scared." This fear initially paralyzed her, but the welcoming atmosphere enabled her to release her inhibitions and explore her voice in ways she had not imagined. "I let loose more and sang music I didn't even know I could sing," she recalled, highlighting how the environment facilitated a shift from fear to creative freedom. Similarly, the guitarist arrived at the laboratory feeling creatively blocked, describing how he felt "very stuck musically" due to the limitations imposed by musical theory. The theoretical focus had led him to "freeze up" and overthink, stifling his ability to improvise freely. Over time, however, the laboratory provided him with a space to reconnect with his creative instincts: "Yes, I started to get closer and closer to myself, I started composing again." The laboratory thus helped him overcome this emotional block, closely tied to his perceived need for technical perfection, allowing him to rediscover a more spontaneous and authentic form of musical expression. Saxophonist 1 also reflected on her initial nervousness, particularly when asked to improvise with no prior reference. She described the challenge of keeping up with other musicians in an improvised setting as both daunting and enriching, ultimately leading to greater freedom of expression. As she gradually grew more comfortable, she remarked that the laboratory had unlocked new levels of confidence and risk-taking in her performances.

The pianist entered the laboratory with doubt and insecurity about his improvisational skills, considering himself "a bit limited in solo performance." This emotional block, rooted in self-doubt, could have hindered his ability to fully engage in the creative process. Initially skeptical about the laboratory, he doubted that a focus on improvisation would work for him. This illustrates how emotional barriers,

<sup>2</sup> The triggering of emotions is inherently a cultural fact, woven into the fabric of the social bond nurtured throughout the subject's history. It signals to others a personal way of seeing and being affected by the world [our translation].

such as self-criticism and lack of confidence, can pose significant challenges for musicians when approaching new and unfamiliar creative settings. However, through his participation in the laboratory, the pianist experienced a transformation. The emotionally supportive environment – one that fostered safety, encouragement, and exploration – allowed him to gradually shed his insecurities.

Le Breton's concept of how emotional environments can transform perceptions and capabilities becomes evident in the pianist's journey.<sup>21</sup> The laboratory's supportive atmosphere, coupled with the freedom to experiment without judgment, led the pianist to feel "much more comfortable, much more secure, and happy with what I can offer myself." This shift in emotional state highlights the laboratory's role in helping participants overcome internal limitations, particularly when it comes to self-image and creative potential. One particularly impactful moment for the pianist was playing in the dark, which acted as a powerful creative stimulus. This unique dynamic led him to "travel through the universe," allowing him to disconnect from external distractions and immerse himself deeply in the music. This disconnection from the visual world heightened his connection with his emotions and instrument, creating a space for uninhibited creative flow. This experience was so memorable and transformative that the pianist often mentions it when describing the laboratory to others. The deep emotional and creative connection he felt in that moment marked a pivotal point in his journey, allowing him to move beyond self-doubt and experience the joy and freedom of spontaneous creation. By eliminating visual stimuli, the pianist was able to tap into a more visceral level of musical expression. This intense connection with his emotions allowed him to transcend earlier insecurities and embrace his capabilities more fully. The laboratory, through these creative experiments, provided a space for the pianist to discover new facets of his musicianship, leading to enhanced self-assurance and a richer creative experience.

These experiences align with Le Breton's anthropology of emotions, which argues that emotional responses, while seemingly internal and intimate, are shaped by external social factors.<sup>7</sup> The participants' initial fears and insecurities were mitigated by the laboratory's emotionally supportive environment, enabling them to overcome creative blocks. This theme highlights the importance of emotional safety in fostering creativity, as participants were able to navigate their personal barriers and engage more deeply with their artistic potential.

### **3.1.2. Redefining musical identity**

Another central theme that emerged from participants' experiences was the redefinition of their musical identities.

For many, the laboratory provided an opportunity to reassess their relationship with music and rediscover their creative essence, leading to profound shifts in how they viewed themselves as artists.

The guitarist, for example, initially felt confined by rigid theoretical structures, which had caused him to lose touch with his creative instincts. He expressed a desire to return to a more authentic form of expression, noting that he wanted to "feel like himself again." The laboratory's focus on open-ended exploration and improvisation helped him reconnect with his musical identity, ultimately leading him to resume composing after a prolonged creative block. This process of rediscovery demonstrates how the laboratory provided a space for participants to realign with their artistic shelves, free from the constraints of formal musical theory. Singer 3 had a similarly transformative experience, noting that the laboratory exceeded his expectations and reshaped his view of both life and art. "I see that interpreting life is different for those who deal with art," he reflected, highlighting how his artistic practice influenced his worldview. This participant's journey illustrates the deep connection between creative expression and personal identity, as the laboratory helped him cultivate a more expansive understanding of his role as both a musician and an individual.

The bassist also experienced a significant shift in his musical identity, despite entering the laboratory with no clear expectations. As the sessions progressed, he found himself rethinking his goals and reaffirming his commitment to music. He observed that "these meetings just accelerated the processes that were already coming," suggesting that the laboratory acted as a catalyst for personal growth and artistic reinvention. The emotional environment of the laboratory, which fostered both introspection and exploration, played a key role in this redefinition of identity. This theme speaks to the dynamic nature of musical identity, which evolves in response to both personal experiences and social interactions. Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences is particularly relevant here, as it highlights how creativity manifests in different forms and contexts.<sup>4</sup> In the laboratory, participants were able to rediscover and redefine their musical identities through the exploration of new possibilities, unbound by traditional expectations.

### **3.1.3. The role of group dynamics in creative development**

Group dynamics emerged as a crucial factor in the participants' creative development, with many reflecting on how collaboration enriched their artistic processes and contributed to personal growth. The laboratory's emphasis

on collective exploration and improvisation fostered a sense of trust and emotional vulnerability, allowing participants to challenge their creative boundaries in a supportive setting.

For instance, the drummer, who typically worked in isolation, entered the laboratory with the goal of socializing and exploring new dimensions of his creativity. He found that interacting with others “awakened things that were dormant in your essence,” highlighting how collaboration can unlock previously untapped creative potential. The drummer also noted a significant increase in his confidence, particularly in his ability to trust both himself and others. “The potential is inside each one... the changes I perceive are in trusting people,” he said, emphasizing how the laboratory’s collaborative environment helped him break down emotional barriers and embrace new forms of expression. Singer 2 also underscored the importance of group dynamics, describing how the laboratory provided a “safe space” to explore creativity alongside others. She recalled moments of intense emotional connection, such as playing a drum during one of the final activities, which evoked deep sensations of connection with the earth, life, and breath. This experience was deeply emotional, leading her to a visceral sense of creative expression that was enhanced by the collective energy of the group. Saxophonist 2, who preferred to “explore more” and plan his music, found that the laboratory challenged his expectations by immersing him in real-time improvisation. Initially, he struggled with the spontaneous nature of the activities, feeling that he had “done everything wrong” on the 1<sup>st</sup> day. However, the collaborative environment helped him find his way; and by the end of the workshop, he had successfully navigated the challenge of playing non-popular music. The validation he received from the musician-researcher, who recognized his understanding of the laboratory’s proposal, marked a key moment of growth.

The percussionist’s experience also aligns closely with the theme of group dynamics and its role in fostering creative development. His desire to introduce unconventional elements into group situations, while innovative, also highlighted the tension between personal creativity and group cohesion. The laboratory’s emphasis on collaboration and shared improvisation challenged the percussionist’s leadership style, prompting him to reflect on his “almost arbitrary” behavior in a social setting. As the percussionist navigated this tension, he became more attuned to how his actions affected the group, leading to a deeper understanding of the social aspects of creativity. The laboratory, as a space for collective experimentation, acted as a mirror for the percussionist’s behavior, encouraging him to adjust his approach to better align with the needs of the group. This experience highlights how social creativity

is shaped by group dynamics, as individuals must balance their personal artistic impulses with the collective goals of the group. Through his interactions with others, the percussionist gained valuable insight into his social presence and leadership style. In the laboratory, he learned to modulate his creative impulses in a way that enriched both his personal development and his contribution to the group’s artistic process.

These narratives illustrate how the laboratory’s group dynamics played a central role in fostering creative development. Through collaboration, participants were able to push beyond their individual limitations and engage in creative risk-taking, often discovering new dimensions of their artistry in the process. Research on social creativity and group improvisation supports this finding, demonstrating how collective interactions can enhance individual creativity by providing a space for mutual learning, emotional support, and shared exploration.<sup>22,23</sup>

### 3.2. Final impressions from participants: Reflections on the musical creation laboratory

*L’affectivité paraît de prime abord pour le sens commun un refuge de l’individualité, un jardin secret où naîtrait une spontanéité sans défaut. Mais si elle s’offre sous les couleurs de la sincérité et de la particularité individuelle, elle est pourtant toujours l’émanation d’un milieu humain donné et d’un univers social de valeurs.<sup>3 7</sup>*

Emotions act as forces driving us to act and experience. The laboratory environment creates a safe space for experimentation and creative expansion. Le Breton describes human beings as emotionally immersed in the world, living an existence characterized by a continuous flow of feelings – sometimes intense, sometimes diffuse – that vary and contradict each other over time, depending on circumstances. This emotional state often manifests through visceral and muscular changes, a shift in world perception, and significant resonance in interpersonal relationships. The experience of the world is thus an emotion that each situation renews with its own colors. Even thinking is influenced by this emotional filter. Humans do not exist in the world as passive objects occasionally affected by feelings, but as beings constantly engaged in their actions, relationships, objects, and environment, continuously shaped by surrounding events.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Affectivity initially appears in common sense as a refuge for individuality, a secret garden where flawless spontaneity would emerge. However, while it presents itself under the guise of sincerity and individual particularity, it is always an emanation of a given human environment and a social universe of values.

The testimonies presented in this article underscore how emotions, as Le Breton suggests, act as forces driving engagement with the world, particularly in creative environments such as the laboratory.<sup>7</sup> One poignant example comes from Singer 1, who described her experience as a challenge to her preconceived notions of music, particularly through practices such as “exploring the body as an instrument.” This reflection highlights the emotional and physical immersion in the laboratory’s creative process, suggesting that her musical evolution was deeply tied to a broader emotional exploration. At the laboratory’s conclusion, Singer 1 expressed deep sadness, a sign of the emotional intensity of the process. This sadness, however, goes beyond mere reaction – it reflects how profoundly the laboratory impacted her identity as a musician, demonstrating that creativity and emotional growth are intertwined. The drummer’s reflection also provides a key perspective. Rather than focusing solely on technical development, he emphasized how the laboratory went beyond technique to explore the “conceptual and liberating dimensions of music.” His statement that the true impact of the laboratory would only be understood over time reinforces the idea that deep emotional and creative experiences often require temporal distance to be fully processed. This testimony underlines that emotional engagement fostered by the laboratory was central to personal transformation. Saxophonist 1 reflected on the friendships formed and her desire to explore new instruments, stating that the laboratory allowed her to “explore without fear of making mistakes.” This testimony exemplifies how emotional safety fosters creative risk-taking and exploration – an insight critical for educators aiming to support creative development. Another example is the guitarist, who expressed emotional ambivalence at the end of the workshop, feeling both sadness and happiness. He celebrated the musical exchanges and relationships built but also lamented the conclusion of the process. This ambivalence underscores the complexity of emotions that arise when a space of creation and deep connection comes to an end.

The reflections shared by the laboratory participants provide valuable insights into the transformative power of the creative process, highlighting not only the intensity of the experience at the end but also how deeply it was connected to personal and artistic development. In the laboratory, emotions served as a critical medium through which participants experienced, processed, and ultimately transformed their relationship with music and themselves. The feelings of sadness, ambivalence, and satisfaction reflect a dynamic process of engagement that facilitated deeper creative exploration. This engagement formed the foundation for an evolving creative journey, where

participants could explore not only musical techniques but also their personal identities. The repeated mentions of sadness, desire for continuation, and ambivalence highlight how the laboratory became more than just a technical workshop – it became a space of discovery and creative expansion, where participants’ growth was intrinsically linked to their involvement.

#### 4. Conclusion

These narratives, considered through the lens of Le Breton’s theories, show how emotions are crucial for understanding participants’ musical and personal trajectories. They shaped individual experiences in the laboratory and continue to influence how participants interpret the conclusion of this transformative experience. Le Breton clarifies that emotions result from an interpretation, more or less conscious, of an event of individuals influenced by their own sensitivity. These emotions are thoughts in action, supported by a system of meanings and cultural values. Affective culture offers models of experience and behavior that individuals adapt according to their personal history, style, and especially their assessment of the situation.<sup>7</sup>

The study challenges traditional views of creativity as primarily a cognitive or technical process by emphasizing the centrality of affect in creative development. In the musical creation laboratory, feelings were not merely by-products of the process; they were integral to shaping the participants’ artistic and personal trajectories. This challenges models of creativity that underplay the role of emotions and demonstrates that creativity is a holistic process, driven by exploration, risk-taking, and self-expression. By recognizing emotions as “thoughts in action,” supported by a system of cultural meanings, this study advances current theories by illustrating that creative freedom is deeply intertwined with personal engagement. Participants’ experiences were not only musical but also redefinitions of their place in the artistic and social world. Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of affective culture in the development of creative processes. Participants did not engage with music in isolation; they brought their individual histories, musical traditions, and sensitivities into the laboratory, where collective exchanges became rich sites of knowledge transfer. These interactions helped participants redefine their own creative identities, challenging models that separate individual and collective creativity, and showing that both emotional and cultural factors play a crucial role.

The findings of this study suggest several practical implications for music educators and creators seeking to foster creativity in educational settings. One key takeaway is the importance of creating emotionally safe environments

where participants feel supported in their emotional and creative exploration. The laboratory's environment, which allowed participants to explore freely without fear of judgment, was essential for enabling deep engagement and fostering creative breakthroughs. Music educators can adopt similar approaches by cultivating spaces that prioritize emotional openness and encourage students to connect with their feelings as part of the creative process. The study also underscores the significance of collective musical exchanges in enhancing creativity. By facilitating environments where students can share their musical cultures, experiences, and emotions, educators can create rich opportunities to foster collaborative learning. This collective aspect not only enhances musical creativity but also deepens understanding of the cultural dimensions of music-making. Educators should, therefore, consider incorporating more collaborative and creative exercises into their curricula, as these promote not just technical proficiency but holistic personal growth. The principles that make the musical creation laboratory successful can be applied to other creative settings, both within and beyond music education. The focus on freedom, collective engagement, and the integration of personal and cultural narratives can inform creative workshops across disciplines. For example, the laboratory's model could be adapted for visual arts, dance, theater, or interdisciplinary creative spaces, where cultural diversity is embraced as a rich source of creative inspiration.

The study offers valuable insights for future ethnographic research on creativity. The narratives collected from participants reveal the richness of qualitative, participant-centered approaches in understanding creativity as a dynamic, culturally embedded process. Ethnographic methods, with their emphasis on lived experiences and subjective interpretations, are well-suited to exploring the complex interplay between personal feelings, culture, and creativity. Future research could build on this study by investigating how different cultural contexts shape experiences in creative environments and by exploring the long-term impact of creative workshops such as the laboratory on participants' personal and artistic development. In addition, the study highlights the need for ethnographic research to focus on the emotional aspects of creativity, which are often overlooked in favor of cognitive or technical analyses. By centering participants' reflections and personal narratives, researchers can gain deeper insights into how creativity unfolds in real-world contexts, offering a more nuanced understanding of the creative process.

## Acknowledgments

None.

## Funding

None.

## Conflict of interest

The authors declare they have no competing interests.

## Author contributions

*Conceptualization:* Luciene Mourige Barbosa

*Writing – original draft:* All authors

*Writing – review & editing:* Luciene Mourige Barbosa

## Ethics approval and consent to participate

The consent form used in this work has been previously approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Rio Grande (No. 70890823.5.0000.5324). All volunteer musicians mentioned in this article had signed the consent forms before participating in this study.

## Consent for publication

Participants had given their written permission to publish their data (e.g., transcripts from recordings).

## Availability of data

Data are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## Further disclosure

Luciene Mourige Barbosa is an independent researcher and Luciano da Costa Nazario is a professional researcher.

## References

1. Sapir E. Culture, genuine and spurious. *Am J Sociol.* 1924;29(4):401-429.  
doi: 10.1086/213616
2. Lévi-Strauss C. *La Pensée Sauvage* [Wild Thinking]. Paris: Plon; 1962.
3. Csikszentmihalyi M. *Creativity: Flow and the Psychology of Discovery and Invention*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers; 1997.
4. Gardner H. *Estruturas da Mente: A Teoria das Inteligências Múltiplas* [Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences]. Porto Alegre: Artmed Editora; 2002.
5. Wagner R. *The Invention of Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press; 1981.
6. Seeger A. *Why Suyá Sing: A Musical Anthropology of an American People*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1987.
7. Le Breton D. *Les passions Ordinaires: Anthropologie des Émotions* [Ordinary Passions: An Anthropology of Emotions]. Paris: Armand Colin; 2001.

8. Lund NL, Kranz PL. Notes on emotional components of musical creativity and performance. *J Psychol.* 1994;128(6):635-640.  
doi: 10.1080/00223980.1994.9921291
9. Campayo-Muñoz E, Cabedo-Mas A. The role of emotional skills in music education. *Br J Music Educ.* 2017;34(3):243-258.  
doi: 10.1017/S0265051717000067
10. Wang L, Jiang N. Managing students' creativity in music education—the mediating role of frustration tolerance and moderating role of emotion regulation. *Front Psychol.* 2022;13:843531.  
doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.843531
11. Peters V, Bissonnette J, Nadeau D, Gauthier-Légaré A, Noël MA. The impact of musicking on emotion regulation: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychol Music.* 2023;52(5):548-568.  
doi: 10.1177/03057356231212362
12. Nagel JJ. How to destroy creativity in music students: The need for emotional and psychological support services in Music Schools. *Med Probl Perform Art.* 2009;24(1):15-17.  
doi: 10.21091/mppa.2009.1004
13. Finnegan R. Cultural study of music: A critical introduction. In: Clayton M, Herbert T, Middleton R, editor. *Music, Experience and the Anthropology of Emotion.* New York: Routledge; 2003. p. 181-192.  
doi: 10.4324/9780203821015
14. Rosaldo R, Lavie S, Narayan K. Introduction: Creativity in anthropology. In: Lavie S, Narayan K, Rosaldo R, editors. *Creativity/Anthropology.* Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press; 1993. p. 1-8.  
doi: 10.7591/9781501726033-001
15. Machado. *Intuitions for a Pedagogy of Intuition: Friendship as an Integral Experience through the Dynamics of Letters.* PhD Thesis-Postgraduate Program in Education-Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul; 2012.
16. Fernandes JN. *Oficina de Música no Brasil: História e Metodologia [Music Workshop in Brazil: History and Methodology].* Teresina: Fundação Cultural Monsehor Chaves; 2000.
17. Fonterrada MT. Diálogos interáreas: O papel da educação musical na atualidade [Interdisciplinary dialogues: The role of music education today]. *Revista da ABEM,* 2007;18:27-33.
18. Nazario LC. *Práticas de Criação Musical em Ambientes de Ensino Coletivo Aplicando Processos Heurísticos: Uma Teoria Substantiva [Musical Creation Practices in Collective Teaching Environments Applying Heuristic Processes: A Substantive Theory].* Doctoral Thesis. São Paulo: Universidade Estadual de Campinas; 2017.
19. Geertz C. *A Interpretação das Culturas [The Interpretation of Cultures].* Rio de Janeiro: LTC; 2017.
20. Peirano M. *Etnografia, ou a Teoria Viva [Ethnography, or the Lived Theory]. Ponto Urbe. Rev Núcleo Antropol Urbana Univ Federal São Paulo.* 2:1-12.  
doi: 10.4000/pontourbe.1890
21. Le Breton D. *A Sociologia do Corpo [The Sociology of Body].* Petrópolis: Editora Vozes; 2006.
22. Higgins L, Campbell PS. *Free to be Musical: Group Improvisation in Music.* Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield; 2010.
23. MacDonald RAR, Wilson GB. *The Art of Becoming: How Group Improvisation Works.* New York: Oxford University Press; 2020.