

SMALL MUSIC ENSEMBLE AND SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS: A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

In the initial study, Cho (2018; 2019) conducted a survey study to explore the relationships between **small ensemble experience** and two types of social-emotional skills, **empathy and emotional self-regulation** (cognitive reappraisal and expressive suppression), among undergraduate music majors in the U.S. ($N = 165$).

Some of the results were following:

➤ Even after controlling for the effect of personal factors, levels of participation in small ensemble significantly predicted empathy, but not emotional self-regulation.

➤ Close associations were found between

Empathy & ...

- Ethnicity: Asian < African-American & Caucasian students
- Primary area of study: Classical music majors < Non-classical music majors
- Age at commencement of music training: Students who began music training before the age of 5 > Students who commenced it later

Cognitive reappraisal & ...

- Sex: Female < Male

Expressive suppression & ...

- Ethnicity: Caucasian < Asian students
- Primary instrument: Voice majors < Keyboard and string majors

The current study aimed to replicate and extend the initial study among undergraduate music students in S. Korea.

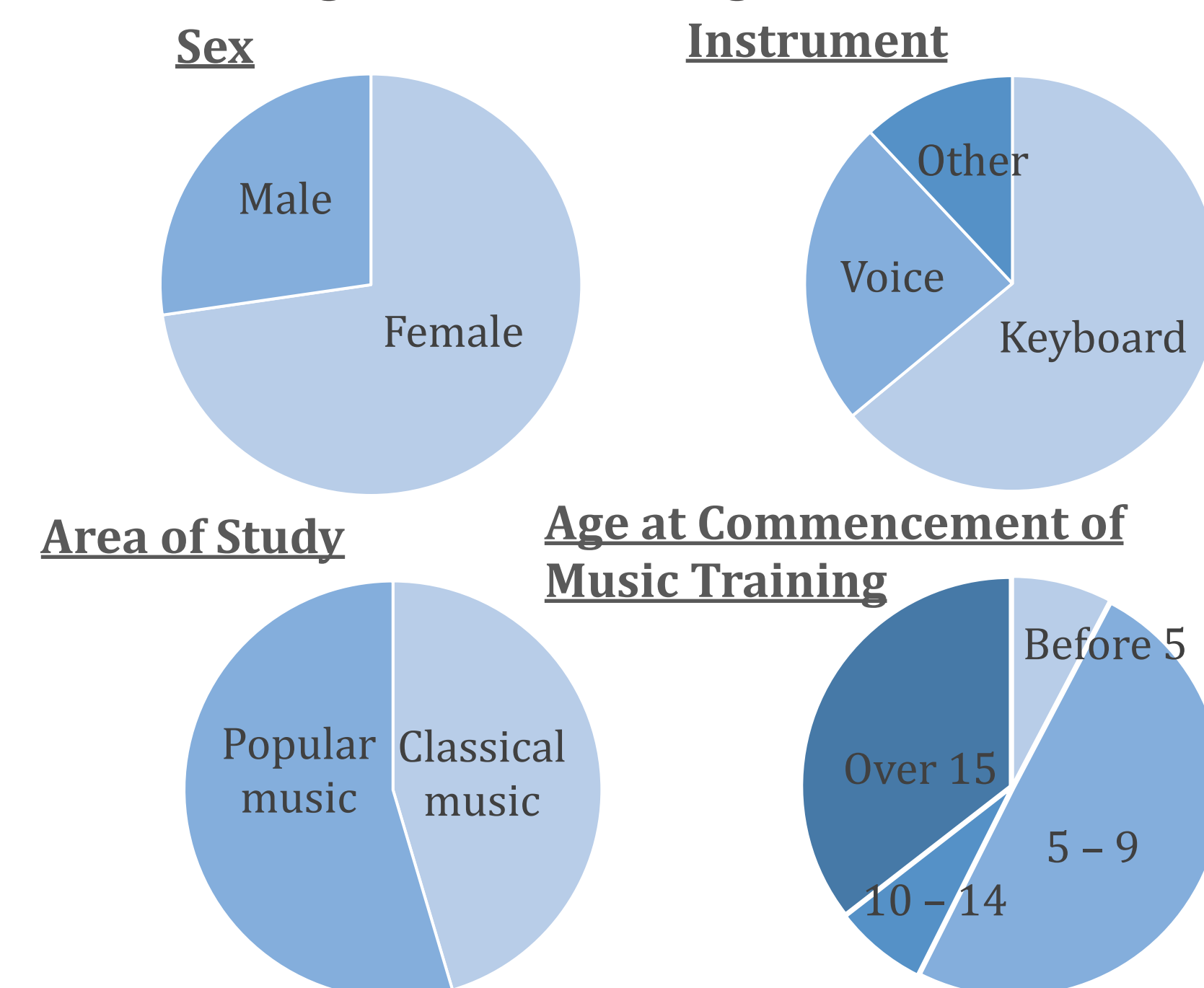
The purposes of the study were:

- to determine whether differences exist in empathy and emotional self-regulation skills between music students from Korea and the U.S.
- to validate the initial study finding on the close association between small ensemble experience and empathy

METHOD

Participants ($N = 183$)

Undergraduate music performance majors attending a music college in South Korea



Online Survey Questionnaire

- Background information
- Musical experience before entering college
- Small ensemble experience in college years
- Self-assessment questionnaires

Empathy Quotient

(Baron-Cohen & Wheelwright, 2004)

Emotion Regulation Questionnaire

(Gross & John, 2003)

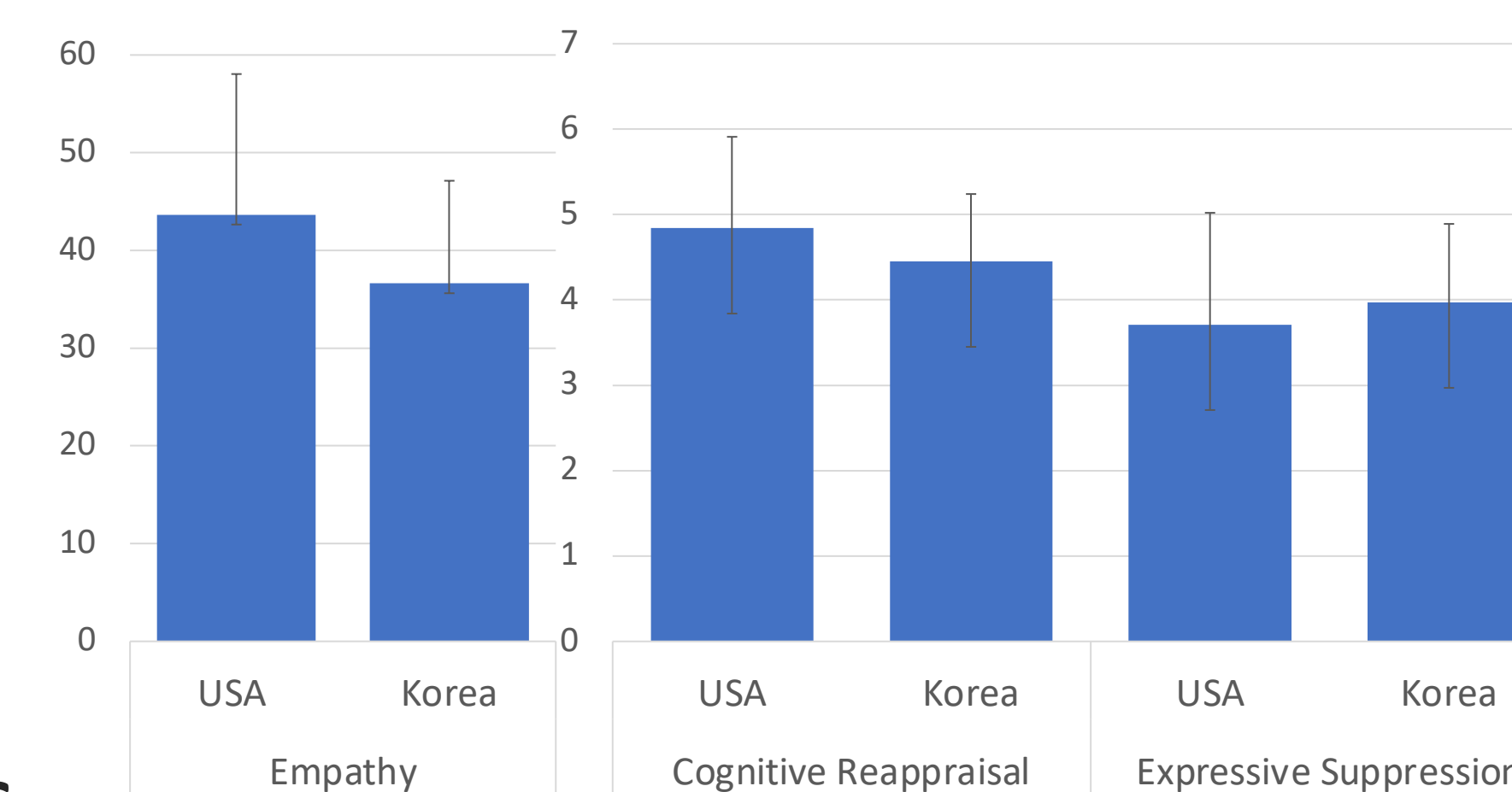
Ten Item Personality Inventory

(Gosling, Rentfrow, & Swann, 2003)

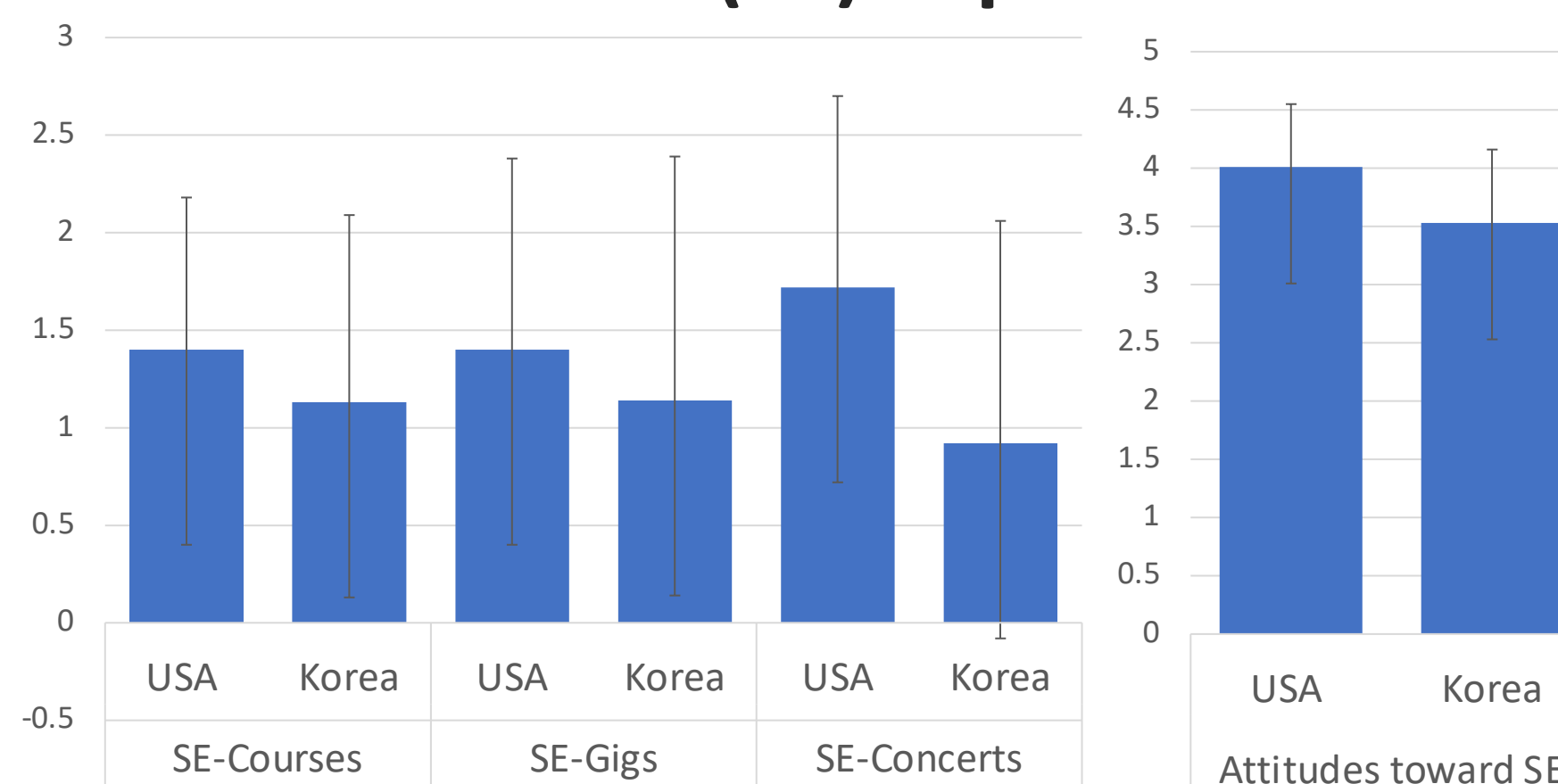
RESULTS

1. Empathy and emotional self-regulation skills

A Welch t-test indicated that students in the U.S. scored higher on empathy, $t(297.54) = 18.19, p < .001$, and cognitive reappraisal, $t(298.81) = 13.22, p < .001$, but lower on expressive suppression, $t(290.19) = 30.48, p = .035$, than those in Korea.



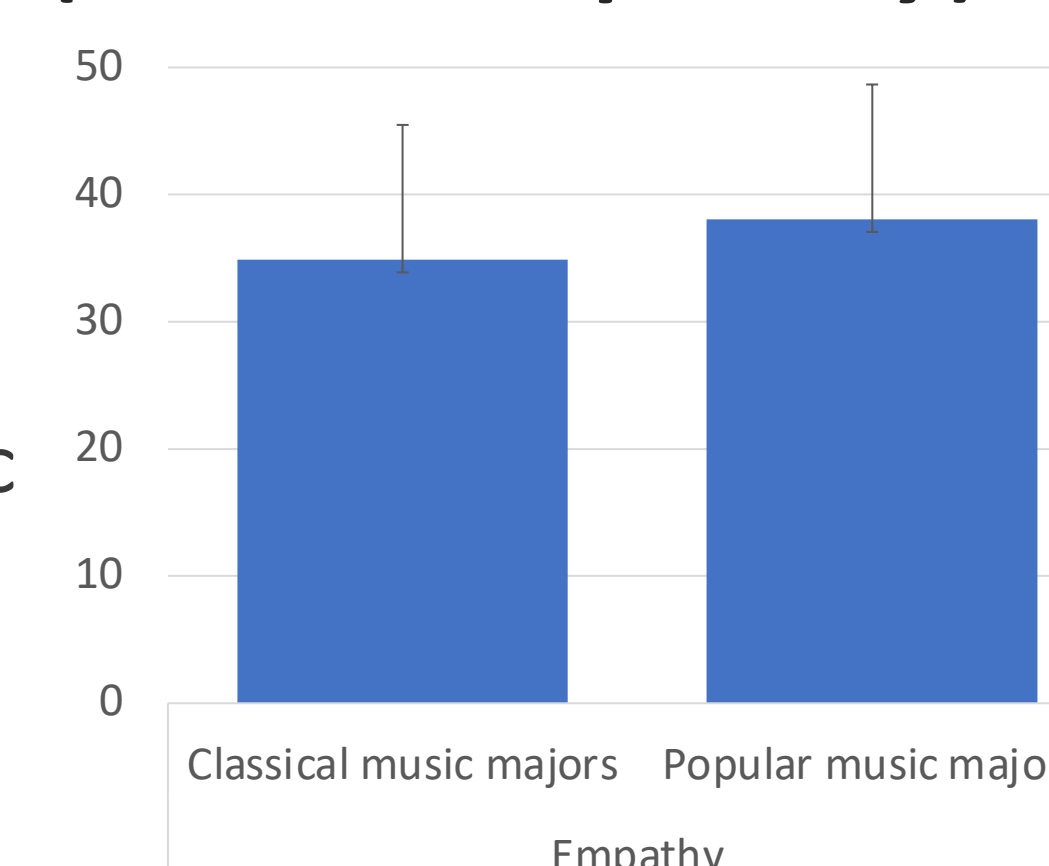
2. Small ensemble (SE) experiences



Overall, students in the U.S. were more actively participating in various types of formal and informal SE activities. They also had more positive attitudes toward their engagement in SE than those in Korea, $t(346) = -7.683, p < .001$.

3. Small ensemble experiences and personal factors (*Korean sample only*)

- No significant differences were found in empathy and emotional self-regulation by sex, major, and age at commencement of music training.
- An independent-samples t-test showed that popular music majors ($M = 38.06, SD = 10.60$) scored higher on the EQ than classical music majors ($M = 34.88, SD = 10.6$), $t(181) = -2.064, p = .041$, but not self-emotional-regulation skills.



4. Small ensemble experiences and empathy (*Korean sample only*)

Consistent with the initial study, hierarchical multiple regression indicated that, even after controlling for the effect of personal factors, levels of participation in small ensemble activities significantly predicted Korean students' empathy (more participation in SE → higher empathy), but not emotional self-regulation skills.

Predictor Variables	Empathy					
	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	B	β	B	β	B	β
Personality						
Extraversion	2.07**	.255	1.743*	.214	.941	.116
Agreeableness	2.730**	.241	2.849**	.251	1.519*	.134
Conscientiousness	2.724**	.272	2.718**	.272	1.430*	.143
Openness	1.359	.138	1.218	.123	1.067	.108
Classical major						
SE Experiences			-2.984	-.143	-4.377*	-.210
Attitude					.645	.038
SE: Courses					3.273**	.977
SE: Gigs					1.895**	.713
SE: Concerts					2.392**	.713
SE: Informal					3.895***	.938
ΔR^2	.205***		.217***		.484***	

Note. $N = 121$. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

DISCUSSION

- Korean students' lower levels of empathy and cognitive reappraisal and higher levels of expressive suppression, compared to the American counterparts
 - Consistent with the initial study that students from Asian background scored lower in empathy and CR, and higher in ES.
 - Due to cultural differences in the perceptions of self and others?
 - Due to cultural differences in responses to a Likert scale?
- Overall, Korean students' lower levels of small ensemble engagement
 - Due to different curriculum in music colleges between two countries, particularly the curriculum for classical music program?
- Higher levels of empathy among popular music majors, compared to classical music majors
 - Consistent with the initial study.
 - The nature of popular music practice: group enterprise
 - Popular music majors' higher levels of participation in SE in/out of school
- A close association between levels of participation in SE and empathy
 - SE involving a highly complex set of interpersonal communicative skills, including understanding and sharing emotional experiences of others
 - Listening "with the third ear"
 - No causality established yet: other possibilities, including more empathetic people seeking out more ensemble opportunities

REFERENCES

- Cho, E. (2019). An investigation of the relationship between small music ensemble experience and empathy skill, *Psychology of Music*. Advance online publication.
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