

Body and Emotion An Interactive Audiowalk

Midterm Report

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Giulia Davila

Tann Jung

Lara Wallburg

Maximilian Wehner

Mert Zeybek

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1 Project Description

Our project "Body and Emotions - an Interactive Audiowalk" connects the observation of audiowalks with the introspection of our own emotions by interactive installations. Humans tend to suppress inner emotions in daily life, so we try to help growing more consciousness into inner emotions with the help of our senses.

The main sense that is guiding around a participant will be the sense of hearing. We create an audiowalk that leads around different installations where every installation tries to discover a human emotion and creates a somatic experience. It will be part of the "Selbstgebaute Musik Festival 2023". With every installation the listeners discover an interactive station that is connected to one emotion guided by the Audiowalk. Afterwards we hope to leave the listener with a more conscious insight to differentiate their emotions and the resultant somatic experiences in daily life and also helping them to understand how important it is to feel them.

Feeling emotions results in a more reflected lifestyle that turns us into a more conscious society.

1.1 What is an Audiowalk?

Audiowalks guide listeners through certain locations where you can lose yourself in a story that is imaginably happening within the location you're guided through. Thus, an alternative audiovisual reality is being created. Observation and insight combine into a personal experience.

1.2 Somatic experience

We base our work on the common idea that emotions, like many other experience which have classically been thought of as being purely mental states, can also be experienced somatically. Such somatic experiences could be the blood rush induced by being frightened, or the translation of sadness to a bodily feeling of exhaustion. [1]

1.3 Interactive stations

To release emotions from the insight of the listeners, we plan on preparing an interactive installation that is combined to the audiowalk. Each station is connected to one main emotion of humans. In these stations not just the hearing sense will be used, we plan on using different senses that help to release an emotion.

2 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to prepare for our audiowalk, we collected some data about emotion and emotional responses. We created a questionnaire with 23 questions which aim to capture how participants experience and deal with their emotions. We want to use the information to find out if generally, people have a strong connection to their emotions, and how they respond emotionally to different situations. This information is relevant for us as we want to create an atmosphere in the audiowalk which helps to trigger or release emotion. In total, we received answers from 67 participants. It should be noted that many questions and answers are not objective and do not intend to be. Instead, we wished for participants to think about and express their very personal experiences. The raw questionnaire without any answers can be found in the appendix. The questionnaire is also linked here: [2].

The first three questions capture basic demographic categories: age, gender and cultural background. We collected this information to help us evaluate the representativeness of the questioned population. We also intend to use this information in order to see if it's possible to observe correlations with other answers. This could be expected especially for gender: sources like [3] indicate that female and male persons experience and deal with emotions differently.

42% of participants were male, 49% female and 9% labeled themselves otherwise. Distribution of ages was less balanced, with 43 participants being less than 30 years old, and only 24 participants of age 30 and higher. The cultural background of participants was very diverse, with a total of 22 different cultural backgrounds having been named.

We started and ended the questionnaire by asking participants to describe their current mood in one emotion. This was done with the intention of making it easier for them to answer the following questions which are very personal and treat topics which might be abstract or hard to think about for some. We hoped for this simple question to help participants form an initial connection to their emotional body. In the audiowalk, we might mirror this approach by starting it with a simple and intuitive exercise to direct people's attention to their own emotional state.

The first major block of questions deals with awareness of the connection between mind, emotion, and body. The question "Do you enjoy sports or any kind of physical movement?" received no negative answers. The follow-up questions about which kinds

of movement participants enjoyed received a broad range of answers. We were surprised that 88% of participants reported to suffer from chronic pain or tension in their body. Especially neck, shoulder and back problems were named here. Tension in these areas is a typical symptom of a seditary lifestyle, and some sources report that work-related pain has been increasing since the Covid-19 pandemic and the thereby created increase of home office times. [4] Follow-up questions asked about how participants take care of their mental and physical well-being. Generally, we received similar answers for both questions, with most people naming body movement, food, sleep, relaxation and friends as important. 25% of participants also reported to regularly meditate for their mental health.

The second block deals with emotions. We received mixed answers about how often participants suppress their feelings. The follow-up question, in which situations participants are able to feel their emotions freely, yielded the three top answers movement, music and talking to friends. More than 55% reported to be very bad or mostly bad at regulating their feelings. Since our audiowalk will showcase and make use of the somatic dimension of emotion, we asked participants to describe their bodily reactions to certain situations. We found that anger was often linked with tenseness in the chest and stomach, as well as with blood rushing to the head. Excitedness was also reported to often be experienced in the head and chest, although in a pleasant way. The last emotion, scaredness, was very often reported to be felt in the stomach region. Many also named a noticeably higher heart rate and tight chest.

The third block deals with the connection between sounds and emotions. These questions are especially interesting for the development of our audiowalk. For different stations we intend to play different kinds of sounds which may trigger or amplify the emotions we want participants of the audiowalk to experience. Nature sounds were named as creating a relaxed mood by 80%, and instrumental music by 73%. Music was named by an overwhelming 97% as being energizing. Interestingly, sound associated with fear are more diverse: Among the named are noise, mental and physical voices, city sounds and music. Somewhat paradoxically, silence, which 50% associated with relaxation, is associated with fear by 27%.

3 Full Questionnaire

How old are you?

Which gender do you identify with?

In which culture(s) did you grow up or do you feel you belong to?

Body - Mind Awareness

Describe in one feeling: How are you doing right now?

Do you enjoy sports or any kind of physical movement?

If yes, what do you do?

Do you have any chronic pain or tension in your body? Where?

Which needs of your body do you fulfill the most?

What do you do to take care of your mental health?

Emotions

Do you often have to suppress your feelings in everyday life?

Are you good at regulating your feelings?

Where and when are you able to let yourself feel the emotions in your body?

What part of your body feels or reacts the most when you are angry?

3 Full Questionnaire

When you are excited?

When you are scared?

In which emotional situations do you notice your somatic (emotional body) reactions?

Do you trust your emotions?

Do you ever look at your body naked in the mirror?

How do you act when somebody is watching you? Vs when you do things alone by yourself without being watched? (e.g. when you are dancing alone, in front of others)

Sounds related to your body

Which sounds make you relaxed?

Which sounds energize/activate you?

Which sounds do you associate with fear?

Describe with one feeling how are you doing now?

References

- [1] K. McLaren. *The Language of Emotions: What Your Feelings Are Trying to Tell You*. Sounds True, 2010.
- [2] <https://docs.google.com/forms/d/185cdv51ozdr5thdrgwv1apa2wiv5ilrve0mugjpcoc0>.
- [3] John Brebner. Gender and emotions. In *Personality and Individual Differences*, volume 34, pages 387–394, 2003.
- [4] Danilo R Silva et al. Changes in movement behaviors and back pain during the first wave of the covid-19 pandemic in brazil. In *Brazilian Journal of Physical Therapy*, volume 25, pages 819–825, 2021.