

**“We All Get Found Sometimes”:
An Arts-Based Heuristic Study on a Queer Music Therapist’s
Expressive Music Journaling**

By

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Abstract

This arts-based, heuristic research documents my process as a queer and genderqueer (they/them) music therapist of creating a song cycle based on the themes gathered through lyric analysis from personal, emotional improvisational songs posted on Patreon.com between July 2018 and September 2019. The 35 songs are sorted by season, and were written based upon the major themes prevalent within each season. The result is a 5-song cycle connecting past to present, excerpts from different journals kept during the process, and the data collected from the lyric analysis. This author claims improvisational songwriting through expressive music journaling (EMJ) to get in touch with one's deep/subconscious feelings is an effective way to: process trauma, grief, and mental illness; that it is able to bridge gaps of time; and that it will help to regard personal material one might not want to dissect without a creative outlet.

“We All Get Found Sometimes”

Arts-Based Research and songwriting in music therapy is a way of self-experiential musicking into the aspects of one’s emotional responses to the memories of the past, the expressions of the present, and the hopes for the future. One of the main ways that songwriting can be used in this endeavor is as an emotional outpouring for social change, and for the expression of feelings based upon specific circumstances and stimuli humans face (Beer, 2016; Fairchild and McFerran, 2018). As a queer and genderqueer music therapist (they/them), the expression of self and treatment of gender and sexual identity on a personal and professional level have come into question more than of other cisgender, heteronormative counterparts. This Arts-Based Research examined the relevance of my personal process to my professional development as a queer music therapist through expressive music journaling (emj), improvisation, and songwriting.

Literature Review

Music Therapy

Music Therapy is the clinical and evidence-based use of music interventions to accomplish individualized goals within a therapeutic relationship by a credentialed professional who has completed an approved music therapy program (American Music Therapy [AMTA], 2020). Bruscia (2014) defined music therapy as “a reflexive process wherein the therapist helps the client to optimize the client’s health, using various facets of music experience and the relationships formed through them as the impetus for change” (p. 36). Taken together, these definitions allow for a wide scope of approaches, theories, and methods that are used in music therapy clinical practice. Reflexivity in music therapy is the process in which the music therapist can reflect on the client’s responses to the session, and then respond back in meaningful and

therapeutic ways. Reflexivity is the authenticity and self-awareness of countertransference (Bruscia, 2014).

Music therapy has many approaches, methods, and method variations depending on the level of engagement, and the needs of the client and the treatment setting. Music therapy methods include re-creative, improvisational, compositional, and receptive (Bruscia, 2014). Music therapists work in medical settings, educational settings, rehabilitation settings, or even in private practice (Bruscia, 2014).

For the purposes of this study, the review of literature will focus on music psychotherapy and its relation to countertransference, improvisational music therapy, lyric analysis, songwriting/compositional methods, music therapy with the LGBTQ+ community, self-experiential learning in music therapy, heuristic research and music therapy, and the arts-based research methodology.

Music Psychotherapy

Bruscia (1998) defines psychotherapy as treatment for the psyche, and then goes on to express that psychotherapy at its core is to help a person make the psychological changes needed to achieve well-being. The goals of psychotherapy, therefore, are entirely different from client to client (p. 18). Music Psychotherapy varies depending on the type. There are four types of psychotherapy and music: music as psychotherapy (there is no verbal discourse and the therapeutic issue is explored through just music); music-centered psychotherapy (the therapeutic issue is explored through music but verbal discourse is used to guide, interpret, or enhance the music experience); music in psychotherapy (the therapeutic issue is explored through both verbal and music experiences that can happen separately or simultaneously); and verbal psychotherapy

with music (the therapeutic issue is explored through verbal processing and is enhanced by or enriched with music).

Music psychotherapy allows for the contextualization and repurposing of countertransference within the therapeutic-client relationship. “Countertransference occurs whenever a therapist interacts with a client in ways that resemble relationship patterns in either the therapist’s life or the client’s life” (Bruscia, 1998, p. 58). It is defined as the generalization of patterns of a past relationship with someone that the therapist or client is taking the role of in the present therapy. In this, past meets present and the emotions that can arise from this experience can lead to new avenues of healing and growth for both the client and the therapist. There are many ways to explore countertransference through music psychotherapy: improvisation, song discussion, and songwriting just to name a few.

Improvisational Music Therapy

Improvisation is used as a method within music therapy and the therapeutic relationship to relate with clients in a nonverbal or verbal manner through the use of live and extemporaneous (spontaneous) music (Bruscia, 1987; McCaffrey, 2013). There are specific models of improvisational music therapy that require advanced training, but improvisational music therapy experiences can be facilitated by any music therapist. Bruscia (2014) defines a music therapy model as a “comprehensive approach to assessment, treatment, and evaluation” (p. 129). As such, the model has guided delineated theoretical principles, beliefs, goal areas, objectives, methods, and techniques. Some examples of music therapy improvisational models include: Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy (Nordoff & Robbins, 2007); Vocal Psychotherapy by Diane Austin (2008); and Analytical Music Therapy developed by Mary Priestley (1994, 2012). All of

these models use improvisation and improvisational techniques as the catalyst toward change and growth with their clients.

Lipson (2019) utilized improvisational movement, imagery, and music with a group of transgender individuals in order to: Practice being uncensored; practice feeling support from others; use music as a coping skill. Lipson states that: “As we return to a childlike preverbal state, we explore sound and movement, we can be free from the need to think before we act, and we can unlearn the censoring that has been instilled in us” (p. 174). Lipson works exclusively with groups in this study, but either in a group or individually, improvisation can be vulnerable to experience. Lipson allows for this vulnerability by having there be non-verbal and/or vocalization-based improvisational interventions through movement. An example of this is having the group pick a word of intention for their time in therapy, and then expressing that word through a movement (with or without a vocalization/sound) that will get mirrored by the group. In this way the clients can feel free to express themselves without the fear of being judged for their word choice. Allowing oneself to be their authentic self within improvisation and therapy, especially for transgender individuals who so often are hiding their true selves to fit the cisgender narrative of those around them, is a way of experiencing true mindfulness. In this, the therapist too (Lipson, who identifies as genderqueer) can experience and empathize with the clients. Lipson expresses how meeting people with varied experiences of gender can lead to feelings of empowerment and hope (p. 176). Within expressive music journaling, allowing myself to be free with my improvisations is how I was able to experience the truest self, emotionally, within the work that I was creating and journaling. It takes a lot of emotional vulnerability to be that open, and a good first step is expressing openly through movement or vocalizations, and moving into verbalizations and songwriting.

McCaffrey (2013) researched how music therapists experience themselves within the clinical improvisations she facilitated with clients. Research findings suggest that music therapists may share similar experiences in improvising with clients. These results support the notion that personal fulfillment and feeling good/personal gains from improvising with clients are not inherently a negative response to the experience, but that sometimes the clinical music therapist's need for professionalism may hinder the therapist's experience of truly engaging with the improvisation and the client (p. 310). The use of self-reflection and understanding one's countertransference within the therapist-client relationship is important when considering research (such as this thesis) that relies heavily on the interpretation and experience of being within improvisation and in expressive music journaling.

Song Discussion

Song discussion is the process of therapist and client listening to a song together and then describing the meaning, emotions, motives, moods, and characterizing words of the song. Gardstrom and Hiller (2010) claim that the term song discussion is more inclusive than lyric analysis, as analysis suggests scrutiny (p. 147). Within lyric discussion, clients share perspectives of what the song lyrics may mean or how lyrics might be interpreted without regard for the music or how the music affects the lyrics (Silverman, 2016). Music therapists using lyric, song, or music (for music without lyrics) discussion interventions can encourage therapeutic dialogue by: selecting songs based on musical motifs or lyrics that relate to clinical objectives; offering client(s) the ability to nominate a song to be analyzed lyrically; and to even turn those analyzed lyrics into a brand new song created by the client(s) (Bain et al., 2016; O'Callaghan & Grocke, 2009).

Palkki (2020) found that 21st century school choral music can be gendered in many ways (i.e. “men’s” and “women’s” choirs, choir dresses and tuxedos, gendered rehearsal language, and lyrics portraying heteronormative situations). It may be emotionally difficult for trans students in a school and a program that may reinforce stereotypical beliefs (p. 128). The process of lyric analysis and song discussion can lead to therapeutic self-expression as well as more in-depth social interaction and discussion between group participants. By gaining the insight of the individual(s) who aren’t cisgender or heterosexual, a dialogue can begin and change can occur from within. Songwriting also serves as an expressive musical outlet where client(s) can explore underlying issues and emotions, either individually or as a group.

Songwriting/Compositional Methods

Songwriting is both a personal and interpersonal method of music therapy. Through engagement and connectivity between one’s own identity (past, present, and future) and the identities of those around them, songwriting can be beneficial for individuals or groups (Antebi & Gilboa, 2017; Baker, 2017; Scrine, 2019). Baker (2017) researched how songwriting explores the self in their research with clients who suffered with acquired brain injury (ABI) or spinal cord injury (SCI). Her results showed that songs that were written more often contained personal, physical, and family content than social, moral, or academic content (p. 46). She goes on to say that writing about the present seemed to be most common, and they theorize that it could be that it is easier for the client to write about what they are thinking or feeling in the moment.

Reflexivity, and the ability to express one’s thoughts and emotions is important in songwriting and compositional methods of music therapy. Bove (2019) allowed reflexivity through utilizing stream-of-consciousness writing to determine what her vulnerabilities were within certain situations during her advanced music therapy internship. Taking these words of

self-doubt and worry, she created songs from them to express those emotions in a creative manner. By doing this experiential self-inquiry, Bove states that by exploring her own vulnerabilities she felt she may be better able to connect with her client population through doing similar work with them (p. 49). Scrine (2019) looked at the use of songwriting in one-off sessions with young people (ages 10-14) who identify as queer, non-binary, transgender, and other gender diverse terms. The songs that were written by these youth challenged the preconceived notions of cisnormativity and heteronormativity within gender and sexual identity. The results repeat the need and importance of allowing youth to have meaningful discussions on gender and sexual identity, and to be able to explore them in a safe and inclusive way. Scrine (2019) concludes, “Beyond its therapeutic affordances, songwriting has the capacity to challenge narratives of queer youth as inherently vulnerable and in need of protection” (p. 13). Songwriting is a method in music therapy that can affect the moods, emotions, and social growth of the individuals within a group (Beer, 2016; Fairchild and McFerran, 2018).

Music Therapy with the LGBTQ+ Community

There has been significant interest in music therapy approaches on working with LGBTQ+ identifying individuals since the turn of the century. One of the earliest articles surveyed music therapists through 59 questions about their attitudes toward working with the LGBTQ+ community (Whitehead-Pleaux et al., 2013). A similar, smaller study by Wilson and Geist (2017) surveyed music therapist students in training, asking about their self-reported preparedness to work with LGBTQ+ individuals. The results of both surveys revealed inconsistencies in music therapists’ LGBTQ+ knowledge and overall preparedness, and the authors of both encouraged music therapy educators to more directly address LGBTQ+ issues. There is a need for music therapists to be trained from a more inclusive standard to address these

inconsistencies in teaching and education (Bain et al., 2016; Brakman et al., 2016; Whitehead-Pleaux et al., 2013; Wilson & Geist, 2017).

Bain et al. (2016) discusses queer theory and how it could be utilized as a framework within music therapy. Thus, music therapy would become radically inclusive with the concept of accepting queer theory (that sexuality and gender are fluid and changing, and are not construct “ideals”) and the music therapist implements a session where everyone is accepted and welcome no matter how different they are from somebody else. The article also states that to accept queer theory within music therapy, the stigma in our minds that cisgender (the term used to denote persons who identify with the biological sex they were assigned at birth), heterosexual individuals are what is perceived as “normal” due to stigmatization within society, and that there would be a need to change that mindset to accept that being oneself is normal, not different. The authors’ idea of a queer music therapy would combat heteronormativity by expressing, complexity, fluidity, and expression of gender identity and sexual orientation. The article also offers a series of music therapy interventions to keep in mind when working with someone in this population. The interventions are guidelines one could use when working with someone who is LGBTQ, such as taking into account gendered pronouns (i.e., he/she) in songs, and letting the individual or group work through and rewrite names and pronouns in songs that feel more comfortable to their identity.

This concept of understanding how using wrong pronouns can be harmful also appears in the work by MacNamara et al. (2017), where it was used as a classroom activity to promote empathy toward others. The responses from the students reported a range of emotions in reaction to gender nonconformity during the exercise. These emotions included embarrassment, amusement, bewilderment, confusion, dissonance, and guilt. This experience also allowed for

reflexivity on prior actions and actions that may be taken to become allies for the LGBTQ+ community in the future. Experiences like this are needed to help support LGBTQ+ individuals in an ever increasing amount of suicides and suicidal ideations within the community due to misgendering, poor treatment in healthcare, and increased bullying (American Psychological Association [APA], 2015; Aparicio-García et al., 2018; Clements-Nolle et al. 2006; Goldblum et al., 2012; Yüksel et al. 2017).

Self-Experiential Learning in Music Therapy

Self-experiential learning in music therapy is a way of incorporating creative modalities into self-reflective processes. In order to understand the power of music therapy, music therapists and students must experience music therapy themselves (Lindvang, 2013; Murphy, 2007). Bruscia (2013) describes self-experiences as an umbrella term for practices of self-inquiry that involve active engagement. A common practice for music therapists is keeping clinical logs of their sessions and for self-reflection. Experiential self-inquiries allow for the possibility of clinical re-enactments and experientials. Additionally, self-experiential learning can be used to work through countertransference (see Bruscia, 1998, chapter 6).

Mindfulness meditation is a combination of awareness of breath and the awareness of being within the present moment. Mindfulness in music therapy is also important in terms of self-care, and the self-experience. Moran (2018) took the experiences of being a full-time master's level student and the experiences of utilizing mindfulness meditation to create a song from the self-care and self-experience of those two important factors in their life. Moran admits that mindfulness meditation and self-experiential music therapy may be difficult at times due to certain thoughts or feelings surfacing that the therapist isn't comfortable with confronting.

Maintaining one's ability to be present within their mindfulness and self-experience is the most important in these moments.

Sometimes self-experiences can be put back into research to describe the growth of the self, or to create something new out of something old: be it music; a new perspective; or a more strategic way to induct self-care measures (Bove, 2019; Moran, 2018). Such also is the purpose of this heuristic thesis.

Heuristic Research

Heuristic research involves the ability for someone to study something for themselves (Kenny, 2012). Moustakas (1990) spent many years understanding and crafting this method after he researched his own clinical depression surrounding events within his own life. Heuristic research has become a method widely used within psychotherapy and arts-informed research. Heuristic research doesn't intend to be perfect, but allows for there to be changes and edits within the research itself as the researcher begins to understand and learn more about themselves. The research changing is part of the process. Kenny (2012) describes a six-step method that is often used in a heuristic research study: initial engagement (why the researcher wants to do the study); immersion (delving into the question in whatever form the research takes); incubation (stepping away from the work in order to gain a new perspective on it through other work); illumination (what has been learned or come into light from stepping away from the work. The questions or focus of research might shift); explication (examining what the process of heuristic inquiry has taught the researcher and the meaning it might hold); and creative synthesis (combining experience and understanding with research to create a coherent whole). Fox (2018) used Moustakas's heuristic process with arts-informed research to discover more about her own songwriting. Her song "Be Careful What You Wish For" is a creative synthesis and retrospective

on the personal work of songwriting she had been doing for twenty-five years, giving her a new perspective on herself.

Arts-Based Research and Music Therapy

Arts-Based Research (ABR) is a methodology within interpretivist research. Barone and Eisner (2012) defined Arts-Based Research as “an effort to extend beyond the limiting constraints of discursive communication in order to express meanings that otherwise would be ineffable” (p. 1). Arts-Based Research was first explored in the 1980s and 1990s, and has since become more popular for music therapists and creative arts therapists to use in understanding the artistic process. Similarly, Viega and Forinash (2016) defined Arts-Based Research as an umbrella term that includes the use of the arts as a research method; where the art forms are primary in the process (p. 981). It is a creation and presentation of art as an expression to thoughts and feelings that may not otherwise be able to be described (Edwards, 2015; Kelliher, 2019). Main facets of ABR are to: determine what art is, intrinsically; how we can both define and separate art from the lived experience; and if they are one and the same (Ledger & McCaffrey, 2015).

Diane Austin is one of the first music therapists to utilize ABR within music therapy research when she created “Grace Street” after a series of trips to an Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) group in 1997. She initially took only the emotions and general experiences of the members of the AA group, but then included her own personal thoughts, feelings, and emotions, and created an Arts-Based Research presentation in the form of a staged performance, using musical theatre (Austin, 2016). ABR aims to remain as close to an artistic medium as possible while performing results. In some cases, in addition to the scholarly writing of the research, the study can be performed for an audience for a greater and wider understanding of the experience.

Austin decided on musical theatre because of her own preferences toward it, how it could be expressive and engaging to an audience, and its ability to combine the staged reading, performance, and music aspect together. Austin's research began as an exploration into what was healing about AA, but the more she researched people's journals and experiences through AA, her research turned into a conversation on what keeps people coming back to AA. This shows that a major part of Arts-Based Research is that the research adapts with the information and the process as it unfolds for the writer (Freshwater et al., 2010).

Moustakas (1990) and Kenny (2012) discuss how it is natural for the research questions, and the research conclusions, to change based on how the researcher conducts their study, and how they realize their findings. Arts-Based Research that is conducted is always shifting and adapting to fit what the researcher discovers during their process. Kenny's (2015) Arts-Based Research explored her development as a music therapist within the context of 12 different relationships with people. The results of this study involved writing poetry and setting the poetry to music. She coupled this with subjective emotional responses. Kenny's feelings toward those who have impacted her deepened from this experience, and her realization of the findings was different than she thought when the research began.

The Context for the Study

Expressive music journaling (EMJ) is a form of improvisational and emotional songwriting I have been crafting. It is designed so that one can delineate their feelings through music, and then reflect back on those feelings later in order to create something new in the present. Whereas mindfulness meditation is the ability to be with oneself in the present moment, emj allows the connectivity of the present self with one's past through creativity and self-experience. Bruscia's (2014) definition of contemporary music therapy describes the

importance of reflexivity in the course of therapy. Arts-Based Research, and the reflexivity and self-experiences that arise from it, can drive forward the need for more LGBTQ+ voices to be heard (Gumble, 2020). This study is unique in that, to this author's knowledge, heuristic self-reflective Arts-Based Research of an LGBTQ+ music therapist's own expressive musical journaling has not yet been done. This study expands the understanding of the queer and non-binary narrative through personal music experiences by a graduate student and certified music therapist. This study also explores the potential for competency development as a music psychotherapist by using expressive music journaling to guide reflexive practice and the experiential self-inquiry.

Research Questions

My research question/s changed throughout the entire study, even from the beginning. I knew what I wanted to research (myself), and I knew why (to expand the queer narrative and queer theory through expressive music journaling), but I couldn't express it into questions that felt appropriate. I knew this topic was important to me, but expressing the questions I was trying to answer within a constantly shifting paradigm was where I struggled. One of the sets of questions was:

How has my identity changed as a music therapist through improvisational songwriting and through accepting myself?

- *How have the themes and musical elements of the improvisational songs I write changed over the course of this period?*
- *What do the lyrics reveal about my lived experience?*
- *How have I grown into a professional genderqueer music therapist, and how will I continue to grow?*

There were many times I had to remind myself that the emotions I was feeling about the thesis were part of the heuristic process (Kenny, 2012); All of the stress, anguish, wonder, constant questioning, and debating were part of the heuristic process (Moustakas, 1990). This thesis itself was the process of grieving, healing, and growing through my past and connecting it with who I had become. My research questions became:

Through my musical journey, how have I taken what I have learned from my past and created a present worth living in?

- a) *What is worthwhile about expressive music journaling, and has it helped me stay in touch with myself as I continue growing?*
- b) *How do the lyrics of the song cycle bridge the gap in time and space between who I was and who I am now?*
- c) *How has expressive music journaling changed my outlook and presentation as a professional queer & genderqueer music therapist, and how will I continue to grow?*

Method

Initial Engagement

This project is an arts-based, heuristic research focused around songs that were written improvisationally and posted to Patreon between July 2018 (which is when I began Patreon) and September of 2019 (which is when I began working on this thesis). As of the writing of this: Patreon was a website where creators could create their art for patrons who would support them with monthly donations or by each creation they make. Patreon creators could be creating podcasts, videos, artists, or musicians (like myself). I started my Patreon for expressive music journaling to present an improvised song weekly based on how I was feeling. Patreon was also a place where I posted previews for albums, or songs I had pre-written. All of the songs I posted

that are improvisational in nature were fodder for exploration within the research, and any song that was pre-written and not improvisational was excluded with given reason (see Appendix A).

When I decided to research my own improvisational songwriting to figure out who I was, I did not quite grasp the true nature of the questions that I had written down initially: *“How has my identity changed as a music therapist through improvisational songwriting and through accepting myself?”* This was a massive undertaking of a question. Had my improvisational songwriting helped my actual self-esteem and boosted my confidence in my ‘regular life’, or just within creating music, and doing music therapy with clients? I knew that my own personal history had a clue into who I was, as even though I am always growing and changing throughout my life, I keep my history as part of that growth.

Immersion

When I turned toward my Patreon and reviewed all my songs that I had posted, I found that most of them were improvisational. This was a relief, as there were many weeks in a row during 2018 and 2019 where I wouldn’t post, or would post a song I had prior been writing. My fear was that there wouldn’t be enough improvised data to research; Instead, there was a neat catalogue of all the songs that I had done expressive music journaling with: I would record each improvisation by starting my phone recorder and giving myself the time to sing about the emotions I felt at that moment. I would do this when I was feeling any major emotion (including no emotion at all/depression) in order to relieve tension, and cope with anxiety and pain. I posted them on Patreon as an expressive music journal to track my own journey. My Patreon didn’t start out as a platform I necessarily posted for other people, but as a place to share my thoughts with myself. I wanted to keep track of how my life was changing.

The way I came into the research of deciding to analyze the lyrics of the improvisational songs on my Patreon was because a lot changed in my life between July of 2018 and September of 2019. I had suffered a traumatizing loss at the end of 2017 that left me emotionally exasperated, and I couldn't figure out my path or what I was meant to do. Through the loving care of friends, and the willpower to better my own life one day at a time, I changed my life for the better, and I wanted to study that process.

Out of all the songs posted on Patreon within the time period, there were 35 songs that fit the criteria of being truly improvisational through expressive music journaling. The exclusion criteria was any song that was posted on Patreon that wasn't improvisational, or was created with another person.

This is an example of one of the shorter songs I created during the course of that year, but all 35 songs are available in Appendix A. I utilized the following system I created for analyzing my songs:

- Before I wrote out the lyrics, I would listen to the song and give my thoughts and feelings about it. Here is what I wrote about song #8, The Rain, from 9/27/18:

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: When the recording finished for the first time I whispered the word "Wow" aloud to the Starbucks. I don't think anyone heard, but I am really into everything about this recording. The presentation, the style, the recording itself. For an improv it was just very emotional and polished and I really respect myself for it, because it's just a really solid improv. It gave me an idea for a concept album about weather patterns.

- I wrote out the lyrics for the song and coded the lyrics for themes.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

I think about the rain on a Saturday morning.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
I think about the rain comin' down on me clean.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
And it shows me exactly who it is.	<i>Direct, Honest</i>
And it knows. It knows exactly what it is.	<i>Honest</i>
Rain is great when it falls down on me.	<i>Expressive, Metaphor</i>
Rain is great when it falls down on me and I see who it is.	<i>Honest, Expressive</i>
I think about the rain when I think about you.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
I think about the day that I left you. It was a rainy day. The sun didn't come out to play.	<i>Metaphor, Expressive, Emotional</i>
When I left you, the sky said "Hey. It won't rain. It won't rain." It will always rain.	<i>Inner thoughts, Circumventing, Cyclical, Emotional</i>
And the rain knows exactly who it is.	<i>Honest, Expressive, Direct</i>
And it stays with me ever since I was a kid.	<i>Reminiscent, Hidden</i>
And the rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
And the rain: It falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
And the rain reminds me of who I want to be.	<i>Thoughtful, Hopeful</i>
And the rain: It tells me itself its tale, honestly.	<i>Truth, Honesty, Descriptive</i>
And the rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
The rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. The rain, it falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>

- After I wrote out the lyrics and broke them into themes, I would describe how the process felt to break down the lyrics into themes, and the differences between what I had felt during listening, and during reading the lyrics. Note here that sometimes the music would change the discussion of how the lyric was represented when revisiting the song to code the lyrics:

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: So I was surprised how many times I used the words “repetitive”, and “cyclical”. I don’t consciously think of this song as repetitive, and even listening to it the repetitions of phrases and words didn’t seem cyclical to me so much as an emphasis of emotion. I like that taking the lyrics out of the music gives them a different meaning. It’s important to think about the musical styles and the lyrics when writing my song cycle for each season. I wonder if this style will come back into play, or if, like a couple of songs from the Summer, it’ll just be a one-off emotion.

- Next I would go through all of the themes from the song, and break them down into 3-5 main themes per song. I did this by counting how many times a certain word would appear, and would choose the words that appeared the most often. If two words were similar in nature (such as repetitive and cyclical), I would choose one:

*I’m thinking the main themes based on what I’ve heard/written are **Introspective, Honest, and Cyclical.***

- Following this, I would then take the songs and break them down into groups by the seasons in which they were released (Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring, Summer’). I chose to do this because of my own emotional journey within each season. I noticed my expressive music journals reflected quite a bit on the weather, and how that weather

would be reflective of my mood. My emotional disposition would change depending on the season, so it made sense looking back on these songs to break the themes into seasons. Within each season, I gathered all of the main themes from each song and compiled them, and then broke those themes down into 3-5 main themes per season. This is what I would base my song cycle songs on:

- ***Autumn 2018 Song Themes: Introspective, Honest, Cyclical, Emotional, Worried, Lost, Curious, Creative, Melancholy, Powerful, Dissociation, Manic, Affirming, Self-Love, Honesty, Melancholic, Metaphoric, Moving On, Sad, Disappointment, Hope, Wishing, Wanting, and Hopeful.***

Autumn 2018 Overall Main Themes: Melancholic, Honest, and Hopeful.

I chose these based on similarities between themes and how many times certain words appeared. I also chose these based upon the overall feeling all of the songs gave me for this season. I think these three words best describe the emotional state in which I found myself during this period of time in my life, and I will write a song based around these feelings for my song cycle.

~Travis Love Benson 2/17/20, 1:55 P.M.

Listening to the song, and then writing on my thoughts and feelings for each song before and after the process of coding the lyrics was cathartic, but I also wrote within a separate reflexive journal during the process. It was a very emotionally taxing process to listen to myself cry over different events in my life and know that I could not be there to comfort myself then. Allowing myself to use the reflexive journal to reflect on the inability to be there for my past self was helpful. The reflexive journal also helped me realize that I was growing, which was helpful

and even healing. Even within the moment of writing this, I found myself crying while thinking about those moments. Here is an excerpt of my reflexive journal from 1/11/20:

I keep getting stuck because my brain doesn't wanna focus. Psychoanalyzing is tough work. Psychotherapy is tough. It's not something that is done for fun. People have to want to change. I want to change and be changed by my thesis, but I want it to be positive. I just can't believe I've had such a negative response to it every time I've tried to work on it. I'm gonna keep pushing ahead but it's rough.

Incubation

After I finished all of the lyric coding and season breakdowns for main themes, I took a break for about a week. During this time, I decided the initial step toward writing the song cycle songs: I would perform an initial improvisation for each song within the song cycle where I would use stream of consciousness to sing on the main themes and create words or phrases that I liked. The following is an example of that:

Summer 2018

Themes: Bitterness, Loss, Wonder

Improvisation Chords: G, C, Em

Words/Phases I liked/wrote down: *"I am a statue."* *"Cold wind in summer."*

"Put me in your house." *"Remember me when the house falls down."*

I created a similar list through improvisation for each of the seasons in the song cycle. During this period of improvisational creation, I thought about how I wanted to write the songs. I knew I had not created the best system yet for writing the songs in my song cycle that would feel meaningful. After a preliminary writing of the Summer 2018 song on March 29th, 2020, I stepped away from my thesis for about five months.

During the period in which I stepped away from working on my thesis, I took time to engage in other songwriting, in performance (online), and as well as I started and completed my advanced internship in accordance with the requirements of my master's degree in music therapy.

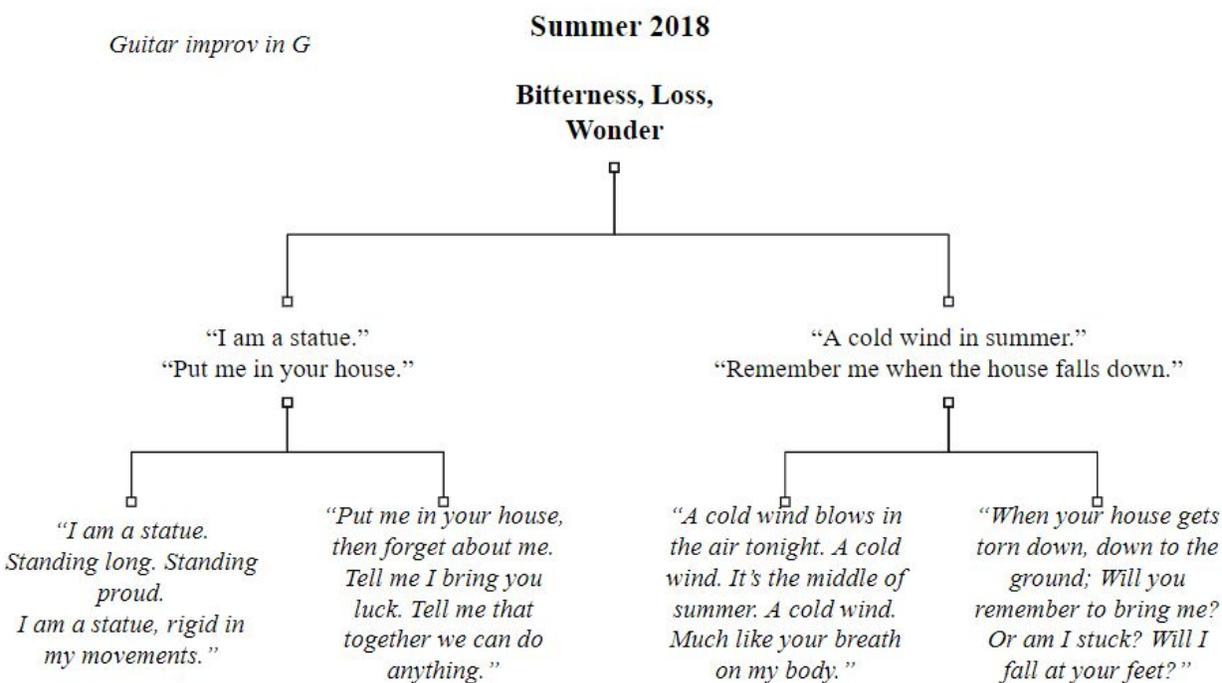
Illumination

While working with clients during my advanced clinical music therapy internship, I experimented with different forms of songwriting. After a particularly powerful songwriting session for both my client at the time and myself, I completed the method for songwriting that I had begun when experimenting with writing Summer 2018 before my long break. This is a step by step of how I would create each song in the rest of the song cycle:

- Each song in the song cycle already had a capo (if any) and chord progression attached to it due to the initial stream of consciousness improvisation done in the spring. This would become the key for each song:
 - Summer 2018 - No Capo. Key of song: G
 - Autumn 2018 - Capo 2. Key of song: D (E)
 - Winter 2018/2019 - Capo 3. Key of song: C (Eb)
 - Spring 2019 - Capo 2. Key of song: G (A)
 - Summer 2018 - No capo. Key of song: G
- A secondary recorded improvisation based on both the main themes *and* the pre-written thoughts from the spring improvisation would be used to help write out major lyrics and musical themes to each song.

- The writing out of the lyrics for the song. This was created through taking the musical themes and major lyrics from the secondary improvisation, creating a lyrical stem tree (see Appendix B), and then formatting those lyrics into a full song:

Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics



- A preliminary playthrough of the song for recording purposes.
- A finishing of the writing out or editing of the lyrics (if needed).
- A recording of the full song.

The other thing that occurred during my walking away and then returning to finish my thesis and song cycle is that my questions had changed. I spoke on this above, but the initial questions that I had going into this thesis felt surface level and expectant. To recap, I had started with the questions:

How has my identity changed as a music therapist through improvisational songwriting and through accepting myself?

The interlacing of my self-acceptance and self-love with the desire to do expressive music journaling for myself through improvisational songwriting is apparent since the songs are about my lived experience, so there is no reason to keep this as my main question. To refocus my inquiry, I explored the rest of my original questions:

How have the themes and musical elements of the improvisational songs I write changed over the course of this period? What do the lyrics reveal about my lived experience? How have I grown into a professional genderqueer music therapist, and how will I continue to grow?

These questions are important to my growth and development, but no longer felt like the relevant purposes of this research. My growth is marked by who I am and the experiences that I choose to have or not to have. While these questions paved the way toward my thesis and how I conducted my research, they did not speak to the true heart of why I was choosing to inquire about myself and my own history. When my questions changed, I knew that my song cycle was ready to be written. I had found the format for writing the songs, and I felt that the completed song cycle would answer the new research questions that I had set forward for myself:

- *Through my musical journey, how have I taken what I have learned from my past and created a present worth living in?*
 - *What is worthwhile about expressive musical journaling, and has it helped me stay in touch with myself as I continue growing?*
 - *How do the lyrics of the song cycle bridge the gap in time and space between who I was and who I am now?*

- *How has expressive music journaling changed my outlook and presentation as a professional queer & genderqueer music therapist, and how will I continue to grow?*

Explication

As I wrote the song cycle I felt a burden being lifted from me. It was as if I had been holding onto these emotions for years, and as I wrote the songs that described those major emotions from each season, a piece of myself was healed. I had realized through this process that I have not only grown as a songwriter, but as an emotional and expressive human being as well.

Taking the old emotions I once felt and creating something new out of it is a way of keeping my past while continuing to grow in my present-body and present-self. Those memories are part of who I was, but I am still growing. That idea of connecting and growing from my past into my present was discovered when writing my song cycle. Those themes are also apparent within the lyrics themselves.

Creative Synthesis: Song Cycle Lyrics

All songs in the song cycle can be listened to at the following link:

<https://travislovebenson.bandcamp.com/album/we-all-get-found-sometimes-thesis-abr-2020>

Summer 2018

*A cold wind blows in the air tonight.
A cold wind. It's the middle of summer.
A cold wind. Much like your breath on my body.
Did you remember to brush your teeth?*

*I am a statue. Standing long. Standing proud.
I am a statue. Rigid in my movements.
I am a statue. Crack me open like an egg.
What will you see inside, inside, inside, inside?*

*Like a geyser. Like a gusher. Like the long gone air.
I'm a tornado. I'm a flourish. A flash in the pan, all part of the plan.*

*Place me in your house, then forget about me.
 Tell me I bring you luck. Tell me that together we can do anything.
 When your house gets torn down, down to the ground: Will you remember to bring me?
 Or am I stuck? Will I fall at your feet?*

*Like a geyser. Like a gusher. Like the long gone air.
 I'm a tornado. I'm a flourish. A flash in the pan, all part of the plan.*

*A cold wind blows through your empty, shattered house.
 I am a statue, I bring luck. Will I ever be found?
 Will I ever be found? Will I ever be found? Will I ever be found?*

-Travis Love Benson, Summer 2018

Autumn 2018

*Wandering through the trees. Wondering where we'll be in 2 years.
 But I guess we'll cross that bridge when we burn it.
 Wandering through the woods. Always misunderstood.
 Guess I should've paid more attention in class. Never learned how to work it.*

*I think a compass never points North (if you're always facing South).
 And I know that we're lost (but we'll be found somehow!).
 Making the best of where we are (because home is where you are).
 And we all get lost sometimes!*

*I'm making my way back to your door.
 But we all get lost sometimes.
 I sometimes get stuck in my mind.
 But we all get lost sometimes. We all get lost sometimes.*

*When the snow's falling down. When the leaves are gathering round.
 When the world feels cold, the night is waiting.
 It's time for you to decide: Honey crisp apple pie, or
 The full moon coming out? Guess it's time to scream and shout*

*That my compass never points North (I am always facing South).
 I know that I am lost (but I'll be found somehow!).
 Making the best of the stars (I am lost in the stars).
 And we all get lost sometimes.*

I'm making my way back to my door.

*But we all get lost sometimes!
I sometimes get stuck in my mind.
But we all get lost sometimes. We all get lost sometimes.*

*When the forest hits that pitch. I know it's the end of it.
When I am lost ... When I am found.*

*Maybe my compass points North (if I just turn around).
I know I might seem lost (but I am found somehow).
Making the best of the stars (I am home in the stars).
And we all get lost sometimes.*

*I'm making my way back to my door.
But we all get lost sometimes.
I sometimes get stuck in my mind.
But we all get stuck sometimes. We all get lost sometimes.
We all get found sometimes! We all get found sometimes.*

-Travis Love Benson, Autumn 2018

Winter 2018/2019

*My summer home is filled with books and movie posters,
Whiffs of things we used to share.
My summer home is filled with lots of boxes of
Clothes and wigs I used to wear.
My summer home opens out on a lake where we used to
Swim, now it's just frozen air.
Fitting itself in the corners and floor boards and cupboards
Of teapots hand painted with care.*

*My phone starts to ring as I wander the halls.
I listen robotically to my voice on the end of the call:*

*"They're gone now. They're gone now. Come home, put your key in the lock."
"They're gone now & you know they're gone now. Come home, put your key in the lock."
"I will be waiting right here."
"I will be waiting right here."*

*I step outside. Breathe in crisp winter deeply.
My soul anguished with the thought of you leaving.
I pack up my car. Take one last look around,*

And when I blink, it's all gone. It is just fertile ground.

*I imagine a garden planted after the last froze.
The flowers would bloom and twist toward the warm sun.
For now there's nothing but the lake and the sweet winter snow.
I bless the ground with a kiss and then turn around to go.*

*My car hits the pavement with that old familiar hum.
I turn the radio on, and I hear the chorus has begun:*

*"They're gone now. They're gone now. Come home, put your key in the lock."
"They're gone now & you know they're gone now. Come home, put your key in the lock."
"I will be waiting right here."
"I will be waiting right here."*

-Travis Love Benson, Winter 2018/2019

Spring 2019

*I take a shower when I get home.
I scrub my body from head to toe.
I clean every part of myself I can clean.*

*But that just doesn't seem to do enough.
There are just some spots that soap can't touch.
I still smell the stink of you on me.*

*The mirror is fogged when I step out of the shower.
I use a free hand to wipe with a towel until
I can see myself staring back, lovingly.*

*I smile and say "You are beautiful. You are loved."
"You can do anything you set your mind to."
Telling myself every day helps me recover
And I know depression will not find me here.*

*There are days when I am better. Days when I am worse.
Days I wish there were someone by my side.
The dark fantasies of ending my life at this point have all but subsided.*

*I perform my shows. I put on my face.
I tell my stories. I try to be brave.*

*Talking about mental illness allows me to feel free.
 I look out at my audience and say "You are beautiful. You are loved."
 "You can do anything you set your mind to."
 "Telling yourself this every day will help you recover."
 "And I know depression will not find you here."*

*Telling myself this every day has helped me recover.
 And I know depression will not find me here.*

-Travis Love Benson, Spring 2019

Summer 2019

*The sun comes up over the hill.
 And I watch the day begin again.
 The Red-Breasted Robin teaches its babies to take flight.
 They will be gone long before the night.*

*Flowers and leaves on the stems of every plant I see.
 Growing up toward the sun.
 Twisting vines hoping they will feel the light.
 Even plants can pick fights.*

*I open up my heart and soul to you.
 Just like a flower faces the sun would do.
 I am opening my heart and soul to you.
 I am budding. I am brand- Brand new.*

*As each day comes and then it passes
 I find myself growing. I am still growing.
 Planting my roots as I reach toward the bright
 Blessed day, and the dark sacred night.*

*What a world we're in. Doesn't matter what age I am.
 The trees may be tall but I can stand tall too.
 What a world we're in. Doesn't matter what age I am.
 The trees may be tall but I can stand tall too.*

*I open up my heart and soul to you.
 Just like a flower faces the sun would do.
 I am opening my heart and soul to you.
 I am budding. I am brand- Brand new.*

*The sun comes up over the hill.
And I watch the day begin again.*

-Travis Love Benson, Summer 2019

Creative Synthesis: Presentation of the Themes

Writing such an extensive song cycle in which each song was based on themes of different seasons in my life (both literally and metaphorically), I was not sure if there was going to be a true interconnection between them. What I came to find, however, was that there were inescapable themes that would begin in one song and then transition in some way to the next even though the songs were not written at the same time. For instance, there is the theme of houses: houses as a self, houses as a relationship. The question of what “home” is, the difference between a house and a home, and the inescapable dread of wanting to return to something that can no longer be was so prevalent within the Summer 2018 song:

Place me in your house, then forget about me. ... When your house gets torn down, down to the ground, will you remember to bring me? ... A cold wind blows through your empty shattered house.

-Summer 2018, Travis Love Benson

I had previously written a song in the summer of 2018 called “House That We Built” (which began as an improvisation as you’ll see in Appendix A) that explored the concept of a house as a relationship. My thought process being at the time that every relationship (from a person you meet once, to a colleague, to a person you are romantic with) is a house. The plot of land is picked out, the foundation is dug, and then you might build a house together. Maybe the house is just a foundation, or just walls. Maybe the house is fully built and furnished with rooms of memories. The song “House That We Built” explored those notions and what happened when the house was no longer being worked on or lived in.

Autumn 2018 opens on me wandering through the trees, noting that I am lost with someone. The two of us are trying to get back to “your” door (being the person I was with).

However, the song morphs and changes into being lost on my own, and in eventually trying to return to my own door, the song returns to the chorus for the final time with me knowing that by being lost I am actually found:

I'm making my way back to your door, but we all get lost sometimes. ... My compass never points north (I am always facing south). I know that I am lost (but I'll be found somehow) ... I know I might seem lost (but I am found somehow). ... But we all get stuck sometimes. We all get lost sometimes. We all get found sometimes! We all get found sometimes.

-Autumn 2018, Travis Love Benson

In the Winter 2018/2019 song the tone changes to confronting the old house imagery and moving forward past it. Letting the imagery of the house in my mind be transferred back into soil to sprout a garden of new thoughts and imagery as my life moves forward:

My summer home is filled with books and movie posters. Whiffs of things we used to share. ... I step outside, breathe in crisp winter deeply. My soul anguished with the thought of you leaving. I pack up my car, take one last look around; and when I blink, it's all gone. It is just fertile ground. ... "They're gone now. Come home, put your key in the lock. I will be waiting right here."

-Winter 2018/2019, Travis Love Benson

I express that I'm going home (to my own new home) in the Spring 2019 song, and getting back into a rhythm of life. Knowing that the past has been fertilized into meaningful soil and a fresh garden of ideas to be planted, I scrub my body clean and know that the mantras and mindfulness meditations I give myself during this period of rebirth and renewal will help me recover:

I take a shower when I get home. I scrub my body from head to toe. I clean every part of myself I can clean. But that doesn't seem to do enough; there are just some spots that soap can't touch. I still smell the stink of you on me. ... There are days when I am better, days when I am worse ... I perform my shows, I put on my face. I tell my stories. I try to be brave. Talking about mental illness allows me to feel free. ... "You are beautiful. You are loved. You can do anything you set your mind to. Telling myself this every day helps me recover, and I know depression will not find me here."

-Spring 2019, Travis Love Benson

By the time Summer 2019 arrives, the house and home imagery are gone. Growth is prevalent in this song through: the imagery of birds growing up and learning to fly; of flowers twisting toward the sun; and of the exuberant experience of nature. This is instead of the man-made and concrete imagery of walls, windows, and doors:

The Red-Breasted Robin teaches its babies to take flight. They will be gone long before the night. Flowers and leaves on the stems of every plant I see growing up toward the sun. ... I open up my heart and soul to you. Just like a flower faces the sun would do. I am opening my heart and soul to you. I am budding. I am brand- Brand new.

-Summer 2019, Travis Love Benson

I have come to terms with loving myself so much in this song and season that I am opening up my heart and soul and allowing myself to be vulnerable. I have moved forward and continue growing:

As each day comes and then it passes I find myself growing. I am still growing.

-Summer 2019, Travis Love Benson

Theme Reflections

As mentioned, I began the Patreon and the process/journey of expressive music journaling in the summer of 2018 due to feeling lost, unloved, unmotivated, and confused about if my identity was right for me. I had come a long way from the detrimental thought processes of the prior autumn; but self-love, self-respect, and the growth that comes with time and with loving oneself were still a long journey ahead. I felt in those moments of emotional turmoil that if I could just start venting about my feelings that I would be able to understand myself better, and that I would be able to look back on these moments someday and understand how I felt. I planted the seeds for what would become expressive music journaling. The process of working in the present to create a better future from the past, and the true mindfulness that would arise from that, is what continues to drive me forward as an artist and therapist. There is an inescapable theme of growth within the song cycle, and that will follow me into the future.

Discussion

Limitations and Bias in Research

There is implicit bias in all research, as research would not be worth conducting if one did not have personal reasons for doing so. Freshwater et al. (2010) said that discourse analysis (such as the analysis of myself through this song cycle) presents a challenge all its own in that the researcher has influence over the construction and contextualization of the analysis and the results that come of it (p. 502). I would disagree, as through heuristic research into myself, this process has challenged the questions, themes, and the song cycle itself. Qualitative research is valid because it exists to be challenged by the self, which in turn creates new viewpoints for future research to be conducted.

This thesis was written through the perspective of a non-binary identifying, queer music therapist, so therefore there is a strong affinity for the health and safety of transgender, queer, and non-binary identifying individuals within the healthcare and music therapy field. That being said, even with what has been listed in the literature review, there is still a paucity of research related to the topic of self-experiential inquiries by LGBTQ and transgender individuals and professionals.

Bruscia (1998) expresses interest in others doing experiential self-inquiries. Bruscia describes how experiential self-inquiries can help one understand countertransference they may be having with another person, be it through a therapeutic context, or within their personal life (p. 98). One of these self-experientials is called “musical reflection”. Within musical reflection:

The therapist contemplates the feelings and moods expressed and implied by the person in a particular session or situation—through either body language, verbal statements, or music—and then improvises a piece of music that reflects these feelings and moods.

Here, the therapist does not imitate how the person makes music but rather calls on the full range of his own musical resources to describe the person's inner world, to project that person's psyche into sounds as it feels to him. The reflection is not an imitation, it is an interpretation; it can therefore sound completely different from the person's actual music. (p. 99)

I would say expressive music journaling is an advanced, self-reflective version of Bruscia's work into understanding another in musical reflection. Expressive music journaling is a method in which one can discover more about themselves by understanding and expressing their moments of heightened awareness and emotion through improvised song, and then returning to those improvisations and creating a new awareness out of them. In this self-reflective work, true mindfulness can be found.

I also think mindfulness meditation without experiential self-inquiries isn't the best approach to working with LGBTQ+ individuals, nor individuals who are at-risk. I say this as someone who is informed in mindfulness meditation. I found that I lost my history through the meditation of the "Be Here Now" mentality. Expressive music journaling utilizes being within the present moment emotionally, and is mindful in that sense, but mindfulness meditation doesn't necessarily allow self-reflection into one's own history while returning to those moments with heightened clarity. In order to be truly mindful of oneself, and the emotional baggage and countertransference that may arise in a conversation/interaction with another person, there needs to be an understanding of the self from a past perspective. I asked myself a lot of questions while writing the song cycle, but the one that always resonated with me and returned frequently was "How am I looking at these situations now, and how is it different from who I was when it

happened?” This is in accordance with Bruscia (1998) who asked a similar series of questions in his book on mindfulness in music.

Return to Questions

Returning to my questions for a moment to gain a sense of new understanding within them:

Through my musical journey, how have I taken what I've learned from my past and created a present worth living in?

I learned a lot about myself through this process. What I need, and how I can better love and support myself through the process of being a music therapist has come to light. The burnout rate in music therapists is high due to a lack of self-care measures (Gooding, 2019), but I know that through utilizing self-experiential inquiries, expressive music journaling, and personal reflections on my music therapy with clients, I will deepen the therapist-client relationship, and allow for my own healing and growth.

What is worthwhile about expressive musical journaling, and has it helped me stay in touch with myself as I continue growing?

Expressive music journaling and my continued creation and perfecting of it has helped me stay in touch with my present self by allowing myself to present current takes on past issues. In giving myself current insight on how I feel about a past subject through songwriting, I can give myself credit for my growth in the past, and my growth in the present as I move toward the future. I also feel that expressive music journaling is something that I can continue to bring into my work with clients to help them connect to their own self-reflective process in music psychotherapy.

How do the lyrics of the song cycle bridge the gap in time and space between who I was and who I am now?

The house/home imagery turning into nature, flowers, and growth imagery shows that my outlook on the nature of relationships has changed. Exploring the idea of a relationship as a garden allows for imagery of plants of all shapes and sizes to grow and emerge, but if the garden falters or fails, the soil will remain fertile and allow for other gardens to be grown there.

How has expressive music journaling changed my outlook and presentation as a professional queer & genderqueer music therapist, and how will I continue to grow?

I am much more confident in my identity as a queer and genderqueer identifying music therapist. I feel that having that confidence and representation for the other queer and trans/non-binary music therapists and music therapy students will allow for change to continue occurring for this field. Music therapy is not inherently cisgender, heterosexual, or white. Allowing for underrepresented voices to be heard and expressed are important in equity. Music therapists should strive for an anti-racist, equity-based, queer theoretical practice of music therapy.

I also feel much stronger as a music therapist who conducts songwriting interventions and improvisational interventions within my work. I feel that I will continue to grow and expand my own countertransference and reactions to it within the music psychotherapy I conduct with others, and that I will be able to utilize those emotions and reflections as a positive conduit for change.

Implications for Music Therapy

Music is powerful, and can be dangerous in that power. It is important to know when it is appropriate to delve into expressive music journaling, or experiential self-inquiries. In my opinion, those who are at-risk for mental illness, mental health issues, or suicidal ideation would

be more inclined to share their emotions through expressive music journaling, but the danger of not being able to handle the pressure of what comes up is an important consideration to make. One may not be ready to accept all of the emotional baggage that arises from writing music about the situations that arise. There is existing evidence which supports the importance of songwriting with at-risk populations (Baker, 2017; Jurgensmeier, 2012; Scrine, 2019), and there is evidence which supports the importance of self-experience for therapists (Lindvang, 2013; Moran, 2018; Murphy, 2007). If one is not ready to dig within their own emotional histories, and experiences, and write/create from them: they cannot expect someone else to.

To this author's knowledge, expressive music journaling (EMJ) and songwriting through self-reflective music therapy has not been explored in the way this study examined it. By experiencing myself in each moment of heightened emotions and expressive improvisations, I was able to develop my own awareness of who I was. By taking those experiences and creating something new from them, I have been able to develop an awareness of who I have become (as of the writing of this thesis), and how both will work together within my own personal process to develop and awareness of who I am becoming as a queer music therapist in my practice. I also fully experienced vulnerability in revisiting my improvisations and then coding them and expressing my thoughts on them publicly for this thesis.

Through thematic analysis I discovered new things about myself and the music that I have been writing, and now I can process through that with new songs. The process of expressive music journaling is continuous, and could expand over the course of a longer period of time with potential clients.

Future Research

As shown throughout this thesis, LGBTQ+ individuals are less likely to be treated well in healthcare settings, or by music therapists in general (Aparicio-Garcia et al., 2018; Bain et al., 2016; Clements-Nolle et al., 2006; Goldblum et al., 2012; McLemore, 2014). Even with queer and non-cisgender music therapists, Lipson (2019) showed that transgender individuals are used to putting on a personality in order to fit the narrative of how others perceive them. Expressive music journaling allows for the free and subconscious sharing of self without fear of judgment except for by the self. Expressive music journaling is an up-and-coming model of music therapy in which not only could queer theory be implemented, but endorsed throughout the process. I strive for a future of radically inclusive music therapy, and to share expressive music journaling with those (regardless of gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation) who are willing to do self-reflective work.

This study may illuminate connections between expressive music journaling and the development of self-esteem for decisions made over time, but further research could develop an even deeper understanding of this relationship. Additional future research could explore:

- The use of expressive music journaling with LGBTQ+ clients, and especially with transgender and non-binary identifying (NBI) individuals.
- The specific ways in which expressive music journaling affects the personal outlook of the person in the process.
- The continued development of queer theory through an inclusive lens of music therapy with the self-reflective work of expressive music journaling.
- How music therapy students and music therapy professionals shape and continue to work on developing their professional identity.

- How music therapists perceive self-experiential music.
- How engaging in expressive music journaling may benefit music therapists to have deeper connections with their clients.

To Be Continued

The culmination of my research on myself, and the time that has been spent physically furthering myself from the moments in which I wrote the songs that I was researching, has created new pieces of art that I can carry with me. Music has framed my life, and then it became the painting inside the frame also. These five songs will challenge me, strike emotions within me, and bring a sense of peace with me from the events that they surround. A closure, yet a continuation, to a time period in my life. They will, however, eventually also grow to be a marker for learning for the person that I change into as life changes around me. We are always growing and changing throughout the life cycle (Damian et al., 2019).

Finally, expressive music journaling, and then the discovery of self through the heuristic process has helped me explore identities and beliefs within myself that I wasn't aware of at the time of writing. Beer (2016) states: "Adding music, with its power to illuminate hidden aspects of the human experience, to methodology is a sound approach" (p. 33). I feel that self-reflection through researching my own music has invigorated me to continue doing work of this nature. Expressive music journaling has helped me come to terms with, accept, and love myself for who I am; which in turn helped me overcome serious negative feelings toward myself and move away from some detrimental thought processes. If exploring my own improvisational songwriting process through expressive music journaling can help another trans, nonbinary, or queer individual (or music therapist) struggling with their identity then it has rationale. I have looked inward to explore my own subconscious thought processes in hopes of creating a discourse (and

song cycle) that would reflect the feelings of growth, self-love, acceptance, and transition from being insecure to being proud of myself that I feel has occurred. Growth is not linear, but growth has occurred, and being able to express it in this thesis will hopefully empower others to work on their continued growth through self-reflective experiential self-inquiries, and through expressive music journaling .

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Appendix A
Lyric Analysis

1. Figures in Alabaster (#1), July 17th, 2018

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: First song I shared on Patreon. It's really interesting because it's very, very repetitive in melody and instrumentation but the lyrics are sincere and poking fun about the fact that people fall into these cycles of repetition. It seems to do this through the music itself, but also through the lyrics and having the last line of each verse (and eventually the chorus itself) repeated.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

The fair is in town again this weekend, which means I won't go again.	<i>Fear, anticipation, longing, immobility</i>
I won't ride the ferris wheel with buckets of candy, or hold you again. Again. I won't ride the ferris wheel with buckets of candy, or hold you again. Again.	<i>Disappointment, acceptance, repetition, longing</i>
Because life doesn't go as we plan it. Sometimes it takes a revolution to stand up for what we truly believe, Not just pictures on our TVs.	<i>Understanding, aggression, freedom, strength</i>
I have made figures in Alabaster of you to put on the shelf within my mind.	<i>Thoughtful, introspective</i>
I do this so I never forget you were there. Alabaster won't wear with time. I do this so I never forget you were there. Alabaster won't wear with time.	<i>Longing, missing, disappointing, coping</i>
But then I have fears that in 26 years, which is double the age I am writing this song	<i>Fearful</i>
That I'll be stuck in memories, not living a life, thinking that it's all carved in stone.	<i>Worry, fear, disappointment, stuck, repetition.</i>

<p>That I'll be stuck in memories, not living a life, thinking that it's all carved in stone.</p>	
<p>Because life doesn't go as we plan it. Sometimes it takes a revolution to stand up for what we truly believe, Not just pictures on our TVs.</p>	<p><i>Understanding, aggression, freedom, strength</i></p>
<p>We have war in developing countries in order to establish dominance over them</p>	<p><i>Strong, Anger, Aggression</i></p>
<p>It's not about the oil, or the people, or the goods. It's about putting them on a shelf. It's not about the oil, or the people, or the goods. It's about putting them on a shelf.</p>	<p><i>Repetition, opinionated, angry</i></p>
<p>Because if we put all of them on a shelf and we tell ourselves that things will never change.</p>	<p><i>Worried, bitter</i></p>
<p>It's a way of dissociating from the world we've made. They're just pictures on our TVs. It's a way of dissociating from the world we've made. They're just pictures on our TVs.</p>	<p><i>Dismissive, repetitive, angry</i></p>
<p>So I say we make new sculptures out of clay so that we can grow and mold the shapes in time.</p>	<p><i>Hopeful, whimsical, understanding</i></p>
<p>We will be happier knowing everyone will grow and change within their own life. We will be happier knowing everyone will grow and change within their own life.</p>	<p><i>Repetitive, hopeful, loving, caring, coping</i></p>
<p>Because life doesn't go as we plan it. Sometimes it takes a revolution to stand up for what we truly believe, Not just pictures on our TVs. Because life doesn't go as we plan it.</p>	<p><i>Understanding, aggression, freedom, strength</i></p>

Sometimes it takes a revolution to stand up for what we truly believe, Not just pictures on our TVs.	
They're not pictures on our TVs. They're living just like you and me. They're not pictures on our TVs.	<i>Power, strength, repetitive, coping</i>

Thoughts/Feelings after feelings/themes: Listening to the song again I kept thinking about how cyclical it was in musical sound, and repetition of the lines. It was really interesting to hear the chorus come back and still fit in with the different topics, as well as have the overarching theme of coping with something you tell yourself you've moved on from, but there's still something there keeping you cycling.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Repetition, Understanding, Aggression, and Coping.**

~Travis Love Benson, 10/8/19

2. Tear my F*cking Heart Out (#2), July 25th, 2018

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I hear a lot of emotion and passion in my voice. Not that I usually don't hear those things, but in the case of this song my voice is strained a lot, and there's quite a few times where I'm not actually hitting the notes I'm supposed to be singing, but that's the point I think. I was very upset at this point, and when I wrote this it felt like such a relief. Sometimes it feels like the guitar is going faster than the melody should be, and I rush to catch up to it. It's like this sense of urgency and escape within the confines of the song itself.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Tear my fucking heart out, 'cause I don't need it anymore.	<i>Anger, bitterness, dismissive, resilient</i>
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Tear my fucking heart out. Can you tell me what it's for?	<i>Hurt, questioning</i>
Tear my fucking heart out, so I can leave it at your door.	<i>Spiteful, restless, bitterness</i>
So that someday you'll know that I was here.	<i>Hurt, hopeful</i>
And all these years I have spent wondering how I'll pay my rent.	<i>Questioning</i>
The cost of love is much too high without you.	<i>Sad, flirtatious, desperate</i>
And all these nights I have cried, wondering what it means to be alive.	<i>Sad, questioning, philosophical</i>
And I have come to realize it's not you.	<i>Factual, honest, powerful, resilient</i>
So tear my fucking heart out, 'cause I don't need it anymore.	<i>Anger, bitterness, dismissive, resilient</i>
Tear my fucking heart out. Can you tell me what it's for?	<i>Hurt, questioning</i>
Tear my fucking heart out, so I can leave it at your door.	<i>Spiteful, restless, bitterness</i>
So that someday you'll know that I was here.	<i>Hurt, hopeful</i>
And I know it's really clear that if it was ten months, ten days, or thirty years	<i>Opinionated, matter-of-fact, spiteful</i>
In the grand scheme of things this is really small	<i>Dismissive</i>
Because one day we'll all be dead	<i>Dismissive, depressed, apathetic</i>
Or maybe the Government will chop off our heads for being gay. And so I say:	<i>Anger, projection</i>
And I say, And I: Tear my fucking heart out, 'cause I don't need it anymore.	<i>Anger, bitterness, dismissive, resilient</i>
Tear my fucking heart out. Let me tell you what it's for!	<i>Sure, strength, resilient</i>
Tear my fucking heart out, so I can leave it at your door.	<i>Spiteful, restless, bitterness</i>

So that someday you'll know that I was here.	<i>Hurt, hopeful</i>
So that someday you'll know that I was here.	<i>Desperate, hopeful</i>
So that someday you'll know that I was here.	<i>Desperate, hopeful</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: This song was very powerful to me when I wrote it, and listening to it again after all this time makes me a bit anxious, but not in a bad way. I don't think I've lost my creativity, my spark, my muse, my energy, my passion, or my music, but it has certainly changed. The aggression and desperate need to let out the energy surrounding my relationship with my ex-fiance that will pop up over the course of these songs isn't as strong anymore. Love does that to you: It never really goes away, but it manifests itself differently. I will always love the person I was with, but that person is gone. One of the main reasons for starting this Patreon so I could do improv songs was so I could write about my feelings, so I could journal in a way that made sense to my brain that didn't know how to write words. So I could have a history to look back on. This is that history.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Resilience, Bitterness, Hurt/Pain, and Hope.**

~Travis Love Benson, 10/21/19

****Song skipped: If Some Day (#3). Reason - Wasn't improvised. Was based on a pre-decided theme. One listen theme thought: Climate Change****

3. The House That We Built (#4), August 7th, 2018

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I forgot about this original version! Not actually forgotten, but it's been a long time since I listened to it. This is the song that I wrote for my ex-fiance. I had been trying to write a song to describe my feelings after the breakup. It had been 9 months at this point, and I was allowing myself to process. I didn't change many lyrics, but the

difference in melody and beat and energy between this and the final version is fascinating to think about. The song became something much larger than me and him, similarly to how the house that we built was too large to let sit there emptied in both of our minds, so now it's gone. The ending, when parts start layering on themselves and things feel overwhelming is so representative of my mind at this point in my life. I love maximalism for that reason. I am also pretty shocked with how different my voice sounds in these recordings verses how it sounds now. I know it's still me, but I just sound a lot younger somehow. I remember writing this song. I remember shaking and crying when I finished it. I remember recording this.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

This is the house that we built together.	<i>Pride, happiness, honor</i>
It rains and pours on the foundation.	<i>Dismissive, matter-of-fact</i>
The shingles are falling. The house isn't falling! The shingles are falling down.	<i>Denial, dismissive, evading</i>
This is the house that we built together.	<i>Pride, happiness, honor</i>
The joists are made of glass.	<i>Bitterness, matter-of-fact</i>
Even though the beams are made of love, we know that this house won't last. It won't last.	<i>Disappointment, longing, acknowledging</i>
One day I will find myself alone in this house.	<i>Lonely, longing</i>
Looking all around for your love and knowing it can't be found.	<i>Hopeless, sad, longing</i>
There is no more love in the house that we built.	<i>Anger, bitterness, disappointment</i>
There is no more love in the house that we built.	<i>Fear, longing, loneliness</i>
I know the love has gone from the house that we built.	<i>Knowing, awareness, reality</i>
Where did it go? Where did we go? And when will it come back? Will it come back?	<i>Confusion, lost, uneasy, questioning, sad, loneliness</i>

My head is aching, my bones are old.	<i>Calling yourself old again, Thinking you're older than you are, wisdom, worry</i>
Just like the house, I creak and groan.	<i>Simile, calling yourself old again, comparing yourself to a broken house, projecting</i>
I can't take care of all of these broken window panes. They're broken anyway.	<i>Apathetic, longing, distraught</i>
And I know there isn't much time left.	<i>Anxious, aware</i>
This old empty house will fall.	<i>Predicting, aware, ready</i>
All of the memories. The stories with you. The ghosts and the hauntings will be all that's left.	<i>Haunting, dire, ghostly</i>
One day I will find myself alone in this house.	<i>Lonely, longing</i>
Looking all around for your love, all around for your love and I know that it can't be found.	<i>Hopeless, sad, longing</i>
There is no more love in the house that we built.	<i>Anger, bitterness, disappointment</i>
There is no more love in the house that we built.	<i>Fear, longing, loneliness</i>
I know the love has gone from the house that we built.	<i>Knowing, awareness, reality</i>
Where did it go? Where did we go? And when will it come back? I won't come back.	<i>Confusion, knowing, awareness, pride, strength</i>
And I know you didn't mean to go and blow my door wide open.	<i>Forgiveness</i>
I know you didn't mean to go and find some other house to live in.	<i>Forgiveness</i>
And our joists were made of glass, and they cracked under the pressure.	<i>Retrospective, missing, acceptance</i>
And our beams were made of love, and they cracked under the pressure.	<i>Retrospective, missing, acceptance, sadness</i>
And our home was made of love and it cracked under the pressure.	<i>Retrospective, missing, acceptance, longing</i>

And my life is made of love. Will it crack under the pressure? The pressure. The pressure.	<i>Wondering, looking forward, searching</i>
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Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Every songwriter has a “best song they’ve ever written” until they write their next best song they’ve written. At the point when I wrote this song, it was the best song I had ever written, but it currently isn’t anymore. It holds a very special place in my heart because I wrote it as a way of moving on from my ex, and accepting that we’d probably never speak again (we still haven’t). It’s really crazy to give so much time to someone and have them still be alive somewhere in the world but completely uninterested in talking to you. I don’t want to talk to him either, but this cold war between us speaks volumes for how we never truly shared how we felt with each other when together. I tried to be open and communicative, but he was stoic. I know he fell back into those ways after years of getting him to open up and be human. We worked hard on sharing emotions, and when we lived together it was great and easy, but all things end. Listening to this near the date when we were supposed to get married (listening on 10/21/19, the marriage date was going to be 10/19/19) adds a whole new level to this. I hated him for a while, but love never really dies. I don’t know if I could ever talk to him again, but I’ve accepted and forgiven him for what happened, and this song was me expressing that I was moving on.

I’m thinking the *main themes* based on what I’ve heard/written are **Awareness, Missing, Acceptance, and Forgiveness.**

~Travis Love Benson, 10/21/19

4. I Want to Be (#5), 8/14/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I believe this is my first actual improv into the phone recording song and I’m excited about it. I was trying to figure out which of the other August

songs to exclude since I only want to do two from each month, and I feel like one of the songs I'm not including is also very important, but I need to include this song! Maybe I'll come back and include it later. The lyrics are how I was feeling that day, and I think are important for this thesis. Also just as an aside I hit a high note that is incredibly high and I hit it many times in a row and that's super impressive.

I also completely forgot this song existed until I played it. It's like a full song and I never did anything with it, or spruced it up to be performable. Maybe I should go back to it.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I am ten feet tall. I can conquer all!	<i>Power, strength, defiance</i>
I am ten feet tall. Don't forget about me.	<i>Far away, fear, hope</i>
I am ten feet tall. You aren't that small	<i>Acknowledgement</i>
But you can't hurt me the way you think you can. The way you think you can.	<i>Defiance, power, strength</i>
And I know that you think that there is a place where you can tell me who I ought to be.	<i>Explaining, Ignorance</i>
And I know that you think that there is another world in which we live, and we die, and we're both really satisfied by each other.	<i>Wistful, dreaming, annoyed</i>
But I'm sorry to tell you that's not how things work.	<i>Truthful, in-your-face</i>
I'm sorry to tell you that that's not how things work.	<i>Spiteful, accurate, truthful</i>
Just remember when you're thinking about how you can't hurt me. And you can't even see me because	<i>Power, might</i>
I am ten feet tall. I can conquer all!	<i>Power, strength, defiance</i>
I can be who I want to be without the constraints of you.	<i>Power, strength, defiance</i>
I am ten feet tall. There will always be no	<i>Far away, hidden away, gone from sight</i>

room for you to see me up here.	
I'm above the clouds. I'm in the sky.	<i>Freedom</i>
I'm not a bird. I'm not a guy.	<i>Freedom</i>
If you tell me, if you say: That you don't care about me anymore. Don't care anyway. I'll never care again.	<i>Apathy, Strength, freedom</i>
Because I am ten feet tall. I can conquer all!	<i>Power, strength, defiance</i>
I can be who I want to be. I'll be free.	<i>Freedom, acceptance</i>
I am ten feet tall. You can't tell me at all that I can't be who I am. Or want to be.	<i>Freedom, acceptance</i>
You'll never touch me.	<i>Freedom, power, defiance</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I really like this song. I'm really glad that I wrote it. I have been worried (because of these songs and my realizations in above lyric analysis') that because part of my reason for starting this was to get out my emotions I'd been bottling in about past trauma, that perhaps all my songs would center around that trauma. While my final song cycle will have those themes come up and I can't shy away from looking inward at them, for what would be the point?, I have fears the themes will all seem similar. I'm interested to see how they change as time goes on and more months are put between me and that trauma.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Power, Freedom, and Defiance.**

~Travis Love Benson, 10/21/19

Song Skipped: Wanted For Anything (#6). Reason - Wasn't improvised, pre-written. One listen theme thought: Bitterness

5. Goethe (#7), 8/28/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I really, honest to God, thought I hated this song. I initially skipped over this song without even listening to it. I'm **SO** glad I went back and listened to it. This is the stream of consciousness I desired when I started doing this project. I'm really aggressively upset through this entire song, and I can remember these feelings. You'll know exactly what happens through the lyrics, as my improvisational stuff is straightforward, but be it to say I remember feeling this way.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Mmm, I went on vacation for the first time in five years.	<i>Bitterness</i>
For the first time in five years I went on vacation. I went on vacation to Tampa, Florida.	<i>Bitterness, Stream of consciousness</i>
And I had a good time. I had a pretty good time.	<i>Sarcasm</i>
I saw a guy that I really liked.	<i>Upset(?), disappointment</i>
I thought that something good could happen. I thought that something good could happen.	<i>Repetition, Strong emotion, Upset</i>
But nothing good can happen when you're the clone of an ex-fiancé and you don't know right from wrong. And you can't handle emotions.	<i>Bitterness, Projection, Stereotyping, Honesty</i>
Nothing good can happen if you don't understand how you're feeling on a day-to-day basis. He doesn't understand how he's feeling on a day-to-day basis.	<i>Disappointment, Projection, Bitterness, Stream of Consciousness, Wisdom</i>
"Choose well. Your choice is brief. And yet endless" A Goethe quote.	<i>Wisdom, Thoughts, Wonderment</i>
And so we went out for dinner a couple of the times while I was there. We also went to the beach, and the beach was really beautiful.	<i>It really was beautiful, Accuracy, Beach, Swimming, Summer, Happy, Memories, Stream of Consciousness</i>

Apparently it is one of the most beautiful beaches in all of Florida. Maybe even the United States.	
We went out to dinner to a Chinese Restaurant and it was really good. It was a pretty good time except for the fact that he didn't speak the entire time.	<i>It was good chinese, not the best, Food, Thoughts, Stream of Consciousness</i>
And you need to understand that he can't understand his own feelings. He's fetishizing the situation. Fetishizing the situation.	<i>Stream of consciousness, Anger(?), Disappointment</i>
He's telling me all about how he wants me to feel instead of feeling anything himself.	<i>Feelings, Projection, Anger</i>
And I got a fortune cookie: "The good life is a process, not a state of being. It is a direction, not a destination."	<i>Sarcasm, Thoughts</i>
And so when I left, I came back home. When I left I came back home to New Jersey. To New York. To wherever you think that I live.	<i>Stream of consciousness, Cutesy</i>
And I said to myself: 'Travis, what the fuck is going on? Who will you end up being? Who will you choose? What will you do? Who will you be?'	<i>Disappointment, Confusion, A feeling of loss, Worry</i>
All the voices in my head constantly nagging at me.	<i>Loss, Confusion</i>
And I know that I should be alone. I have so many goals and dreams and ambitions. So many goals and dreams and ambitions.	<i>Truth, Powerful</i>
To accomplish all on my own and not with the baggage of somebody else that can't be there.	<i>Powerful, Wisdom</i>
And I know that it's really hard to be alone. It's hard to be queer, and genderqueer, and exactly who I want to be right here.	<i>Honesty, Stream of consciousness, Straightforward</i>
And when I go and I play my shows and I talk about being who I am, and I talk about everything that's wrong, does anyone even listen to me?	<i>Stream of consciousness, Loss, Confusion, Bitterness</i>

Is anyone even listening?	<i>Questioning, Loss, Confusion</i>
Will I ever be famous, or does that even matter?	<i>Superficial, Thoughts, Worry, Loss</i>
Does anything even matter? Does anything even matter?	<i>Questioning, Wondering, Expression</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I chose this song because it is a great example of early stages of my improvisational songwriting. I try and remember choruses or thematic ideas in the music to come back to later on in the improvisation, and I did that here too. I was definitely channeling Ezra Furman's stream of consciousness lyricism in this, I can tell. Damn the singing of the word Fetishization is so good.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **A feeling of Loss, Bitterness, and Stream of Consciousness**

~Travis Love Benson 1/19/20

6. Autumn All Around (#8), 9/4/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I wasn't initially going to use this song, but I realized that I had to because it was very pure stream of consciousness, which is what I am looking to analyze in this project. I didn't want to do it because it's so long and there's a lot of repeating lyrics. It was a very specific feeling I had in the fall of 2018, but it's important to revisit, especially in revisiting things I didn't and don't want to listen to again. I forced myself to listen through fully, and I didn't want to. In thinking about these feelings I think it has to do with knowing how much better I am now at this, but also it is a tough feeling because the fall of 2018 was a beautiful time in my life, and I reminisce on it in a beautiful way. I like some of these melodies I meant to revisit, but never did.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

When the leaves fall. When the leaves fall. When there is Autumn all around.	<i>Introspective, Curious, Inquisitive</i>
When the pumpkins grow, and the corn stalks are tall, and everybody gets down.	<i>Reminiscent, Whimsical, Wistful</i>
When the moon is full, and the clouds are white, and Halloween night is around the bend:	<i>Spooky</i>
What will we do then when the night is full? What will we do when everything is dead?	<i>Curious, Thoughtful, Spooky</i>
And you can't have that much death without it affecting somebody. You can't have that much death without it affecting somebody.	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek, Straightforward, Thoughtful</i>
I know. I know. Affecting somebody when there's Fall all the time. When there's Fall all the time. When there's Fall all the time.	<i>Blaming, Describing, Thinking</i>
You can't have that much death without it affecting somebody. You can't have that much love without it-	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek, Straightforward, Thoughtful</i>
You can't have that much- You can't have that much death without it affecting somebody. Can't have that much death- You can't have that much death without it affecting somebody.	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek, Straightforward, Thoughtful</i>
Can't have Autumn fun unless you are loving somebody, what if there is no one to love? If there is no one to love ... If there is no one to love when Autumn's all around. All around. All around.	<i>Questioning, Unsure, Lonely</i>
You can't have that much love without it affecting somebody. You can't have that much death without it affecting somebody when Autumn's all around. When Autumn's all around. When Autumn's all around. When Autumn's all around.	<i>Lonely, Pointed, Blaming</i>
When the sky- When the sky is gray and the clouds are white. When the day is full where the moonlight shines bright. When it's cold	<i>Descriptive</i>

outside and I don't know what to do I look around for you.	
It's Autumn all the time. Autumn feels alright. But with all that death comes a price. There-	<i>Straightforward</i>
Comes a price.	<i>Answer</i>
There is only so much death with Autumn all around. There is only so much love with Autumn all around. There is only so much hope with Autumn all around. There is only so much.	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek, Straightforward, Thoughtful</i>
And there can only be so much love with Autumn all around. There can only be so much love with Autumn all around. There is only so much death with Autumn all around. There is only so much hope with Autumn all around.	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek, Straightforward, Thoughtful, Lonely</i>
And if it's Autumn all the time will I fall in line? Autumn all the time. Will I fall in line? In line?	<i>Sad, Wondering, Inquisitive</i>
(Spoken): Something's comin'.	<i>Mysterious, Ominous</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I really like some ideas that I came up with in this improv. I don't know why I was so against including this. Possibly because of the repetition or not wanting to seem weird for having a 7 minute song about death, but it was worth it to listen through again a couple times. I think at this point I was dating someone I really liked that was in an open relationship, and I wanted someone that just wanted to be with me. I knew I needed to be on my own, and I can see that in these songs, but I was trying so hard to convince myself I would find someone. It would have been too soon.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Tongue-in-Cheek, Lonely,** and **Thoughtful.**

7. Will I Ever (#9), 9/12/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: This is very much about my longest relationship, and it is an emotional roller coaster where I'm definitely crying while I sing this and record it. This is why I had made the Patreon: To capture moments of my life like this in history and always remember where I came from. To force myself to write through the pain, grow, and change. This was a beautiful capture of a point in my life where I still wanted to talk to that person, and move forward knowing that person, even knowing that it could never happen. There's a pain, a bitterness, a desire for the other person to experience pain that I no longer have. I will forever hold love and resentment toward this person in my heart but I have no desire for them to experience pain, nor do I need them to pay any recompense. A life without me is recompense enough, in my opinion; As that person will miss out on a lifetime of beauty, exploration, wonder, and love.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

(Spoken) Where are we gonna go today?	<i>Wonder, Excitement, Emotional</i>
When the moon hits the sky and I am drawn to it.	<i>Attraction</i>
When you say goodbye I am drawn to it.	<i>Attraction</i>
These little words make so much sense into the cup they grow, and	<i>Spring, Growth, Life</i>
These little thoughts I have inside my head may make sense someday.	<i>Wonder, Confusion</i>
If I ever see you here I again will I say to you "Hello my friend!"	<i>Kindness, Compassion, Questioning</i>
Or will I just stand up and say that "I am not okay"?	<i>Emotional, Truth, Upset</i>
There will be a recompense for all you've done to me.	<i>Bitterness, Anger</i>

Or maybe not but for all it's worth I know that's what I want to see.	<i>Bitterness, Anger</i>
Will you ever be out of my head, or will you be there until I'm dead?	<i>Questioning, Wonder, Worry</i>
Will you ever be out of my mind or will you be there until I find some peace? Peace.	<i>Hope, Wonder, Worry</i>
I know that someday I will see your face and be alone. And when that happens you will know how I'm feeling.	<i>Unsure, Truth, Expression</i>
I know you're trying to forget the stuff that you once knew when you knew me but don't you see that self is here with me?	<i>Upset, Disappointment</i>
And will I ever be over you or will you be with me until I'm 32?	<i>Questioning, Worry</i>
Will you be there when I get old or will you be alone too?	<i>Wonder, Apathy</i>
Will you be there until I'm dead or will you be there when I've said:	<i>Questioning, Expression</i>
"I won't know you again"	<i>Disappointment, Honesty</i>
"I want to know you again."	<i>Sadness, Unsure</i>
"I want to know, know you, hold you, hold you, know you, know you, know me."	<i>Desperation, Worry, Sadness</i>
Will I ever be over you? Is that even something that I want to do?	<i>Questioning, Reflection</i>
Will you ever be over me? Well that depends on if you ever agree that you and I were good. We were good. Now we're not.	<i>Projection, Interpretation, Disappointment</i>
And when you know that, we'll see the end will come for you and me.	<i>Moving On, Hope, Expectations, Wondering</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I was surprised about this song. I remember a lot of the songs I've been talking about at least casually, but this song I had skipped over and come back to

and realized it was improvised and had to be done. Upon first listen I got so many emotions, hearing my voice crack, hearing myself actually sob over somebody, it was hard. I wish I could go back and love myself sooner and tell myself I'd be okay. I wish a lot of things, but I find this song so powerful compared to where I am now. This will definitely influence the first song of the song-cycle heavily.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Wonder, Expression, and Disappointment.**

Song Skipped: The River (#10). Reason - Wasn't improvised, pre-written. One listen theme thought: Growth & Power

Summer 2018 Song Themes: Repetition, Understanding, Aggression, Coping, Resilience, Bitterness, Hurt/Pain, Hope, Awareness, Missing, Acceptance, Forgiveness, Power, Freedom, Defiance, A feeling of Loss, Bitterness, Stream of Consciousness, Tongue-in-Cheek, Lonely, Thoughtful, Wonder, Expression, and Disappointment.

Summer 2018 Overall Main Themes: Bitterness, Loss, and Wonder.

I chose these based on similarities between words, repeating words, and the overall feeling all of the songs from this season gave me. I didn't and won't choose "Stream of Consciousness" because this is part of the point of the thesis, and is a moot point since the song cycle will be written based on these themes through a stream of consciousness lens and then paired down and written into songs.

8. The Rain (#11), 9/27/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: When the recording finished for the first time I whispered the word "Wow" aloud to the Starbucks. I don't think anyone heard, but I am really into everything about this recording. The presentation, the style, the recording itself. For an

improv it was just very emotional and polished and I really respect myself for it, because it's just a really solid improv. It gave me an idea for a concept album about weather patterns.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

I think about the rain on a Saturday morning.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
I think about the rain comin' down on me clean.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
And it shows me exactly who it is.	<i>Direct, Honest</i>
And it knows. It knows exactly what it is.	<i>Honest</i>
Rain is great when it falls down on me.	<i>Expressive, Metaphor</i>
Rain is great when it falls down on me and I see who it is.	<i>Honest, Expressive</i>
I think about the rain when I think about you.	<i>Introspective, Thoughtful</i>
I think about the day that I left you. It was a rainy day. The sun didn't come out to play.	<i>Metaphor, Expressive, Emotional</i>
When I left you, the sky said "Hey. It won't rain. It won't rain." It will always rain.	<i>Inner thoughts, Circumventing, Cyclical, Emotional</i>
And the rain knows exactly who it is.	<i>Honest, Expressive, Direct</i>
And it stays with me ever since I was a kid.	<i>Reminiscent, Hidden</i>
And the rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
And the rain: It falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
And the rain reminds me of who I want to be.	<i>Thoughtful, Hopeful</i>
And the rain: It tells me itself its tale, honestly.	<i>Truth, Honesty, Descriptive</i>
And the rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. It falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>
The rain falls down. It falls down. It falls down. The rain, it falls down.	<i>Repetitive, Cyclical, Downpour, Emotional</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: So I was surprised how many times I used the words “repetitive”, and “cyclical”. I don’t consciously think of this song as repetitive, and even listening to it the repetitions of phrases and words didn’t seem cyclical to me so much as an emphasis of emotion. I like that taking the lyrics out of the music gives them a different meaning. It’s important to think about the musical styles and the lyrics when writing my song cycle for each season. I wonder if this style will come back into play, or if, like a couple of songs from the Summer, it’ll just be a one-off emotion.

I’m thinking the *main themes* based on what I’ve heard/written are **Introspective, Honest, and Cyclical.**

9. I have a date on Friday (#12), 10/3/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: This is another song in which I was amazed. I actually said “Oh, wow” out loud and then started smiling really happily. I think that it’s sad (to me now in 2020) that I wrote so many songs about my ex even a year later, but I also think that I was very productive in letting myself grieve, and cope, and use my music in a positive and emotionally safe container.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I have a date. I have a date on Friday.	<i>Nervous, Worried</i>
It’s pretty cool I guess.	<i>Nonchalant</i>
I have a date on Friday.	<i>Straightforward</i>
I’m trying my best to handle the situation. To handle the situation like an adult.	<i>Coping, Thoughtful</i>
I enjoy being around him. I enjoy being around him, but what does that say about me? What does that say about me?	<i>Questioning, Worrying, Self-Hating</i>

I don't know. I don't know what to expect. I don't know what to expect. I don't know. I don't know. I don't know.	<i>Repetitive, Stuck, Emotional</i>
I have a date on Friday.	<i>Nervous, Matter-of-fact</i>
We've had one date before.	<i>Matter-of-fact</i>
We went out to dinner and he paid and that was nice.	<i>Greedy, Thoughtful, Ironic(?)</i>
This time I'm paying I- I was the one who asked if we could go out. So I get to plan the date because I'm paying. I get to plan the date.	<i>Worried, Lawmaking, Deciding</i>
And I don't know. I don't know. I don't know how to feel.	<i>Repetitive, Stuck, Emotional, Lost</i>
The world gets crazy.	<i>Straightforward, Worried</i>
It's been- It's been a year since I broke up with my ex-fiance of two years, but I've known him much longer than that. Much longer than that.	<i>Emotional, Reminiscent, Coping</i>
And I don't know. And I don't know how to feel.	<i>Emotional, Lost</i>
This guy is, sadly, I must admit: The healthiest person I've ever dated and that doesn't feel right because he has a boyfriend. It doesn't feel right.	<i>Emotional, Lost, Broken-hearted, Honest</i>
And I know it's an open- An open relationship. But how far can you go? How far can you go? How far can you go on a sinking ship?	<i>Metaphor, Emotional, Questioning</i>
How far can you go? How far can you go? How far can you go on a sinking - A sinking ship?	<i>Metaphor, Emotional, Questioning</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I was surprised to see the word "metaphor" come up as often as it did. I am inSANELY proud of the lyric "How far can you go on a sinking ship?" What an amazing lyric for an improv.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Emotional, Worried, and Lost.**

10. Garden (#13), 10/10/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: This song is beautiful, truthfully. I remember being stuck in my emotions (as I get) and needing to write about something, *anything* else. I remember saying "Write about a garden" to myself and then beginning this process. I remember writing this thinking about a guy that I really liked at the time, and the fact that we had been talking on and off for a long time. We wouldn't meet for almost another year after I wrote this song for many reasons, and now we're not speaking anymore; But even though I was thinking about him, the song isn't for him. Like all good art, the song is for me as the songwriter, and I improvised something special here. I remember performing it at my birthday show in 2019 and the crowd really liked it. There are two songs I want to release in the spring as a two-song thing, and this is one of them.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Tell me why the flowers grow?	<i>Curious, Wonder, Whimsy.</i>
Tell me why the cotton grows.	<i>Curious.</i>
Tell me why my life grows old.	<i>Worried.</i>
Tell me what the future holds.	<i>Anxious.</i>
Tell me what I'll never know.	<i>Sad.</i>
Tell me when I'll get to go outside.	<i>Bitter, Curious, Impatient.</i>
Will I ever see the sun? Will I ever see the sun?	<i>Impatient.</i>
Tell me why my life says "bye".	<i>Curious, Sad</i>
Tell me what I did to deserve this.	<i>Reminiscent, Despairing</i>

Is it what you wished for?	<i>Bitter.</i>
Tell me when I will see you and exactly what you wanted me to do.	<i>Excited,</i>
Tell me why I cannot find you. Tell me why I cannot find this life.	<i>Straightforward, Wanting an answer, Demanding.</i>
Tell me why I cannot find you. Tell me why I cannot go outside.	<i>Straightforward, Wanting an answer, Demanding.</i>
When will I go outside? Is it too late?	<i>Curious, worried, upset.</i>
Is it too late to be here?	<i>Worried.</i>
Waiting on my porch for you. Waiting in my house for you. Waiting in my lawn for you and planting out a garden.	<i>Melancholy, Attending, Interested, Creative.</i>
Waiting on the porch for you. Waiting on my yard for you. Waiting in my house for you and planting out a garden.	<i>Melancholy, Attending, Interested, Creative.</i>
Planting out a garden, and will I ever get to go outside?	<i>Creative, Melancholy, Curious.</i>
And will I ever get to go outside?	<i>Hopeful.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Whimsy, and Melancholy were the two words that came up where I was pretty excited and pretty in agreement based on the feeling I have when listening, and the lyrics matching up with that feeling. This song is melancholic in sound, in recording, and in structure. I love this song a lot, and I think this will be a great basis for what I choose to do with the second song.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Curious, Creative, and Melancholy.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/4/20

11. This is my body (#14), 10/17/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: So this was a wild ride! I remembered this in the moment, but I had forgotten it until then. I'm so neurotic and upset in the song.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Spoken: "Sometimes you just gotta start think-You jus-You just gotta start thinking about something. Sometimes you just gotta start thinking about somethin'."	<i>Neurotic, Manic, Hyper, Anxious.</i>
Spoken: "Sometimes you just gotta start thinking about something. Sometimes you just gotta start thinking about somethin'. Um."	<i>Neurotic, Manic, Hyper, Anxious.</i>
My head is so very loud.	<i>Expressive, Mental Health, Honesty</i>
My feet can't stay on the ground. I'm floating- I'm floating away. Floating away. Floating away.	<i>Dissociating, Dysphoria.</i>
My arms- My arms are on my body. They give me strength. They give me strength. They give me hope to tell me "no". To be let go of.	<i>Grounding, Forceful, Despairing.</i>
This is my body. You can't have it anymore.	<i>Statement, Truthful, Powerful.</i>
These are my legs. They run. They run. They run. They run away from you.	<i>Attachment, Grounding, Fearful.</i>
Away from you.	<i>Truthful.</i>
They run. They run. They run. They run. They run. Away from you. Away from you. Away. Away.	<i>Fearful, Hopeful, Expressive, Forceful.</i>
This is my body! You can't tell me what to do.	<i>Powerful.</i>
This is my body! You can't tell me what to do!	<i>Powerful.</i>
I won't let you. I won't LET you.	<i>Powerful.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I was pretty shocked that I thought that this song was dysphoric and dissociative. I *agree* with myself, but it's interesting to look at from a trans/non-binary perspective and say "Yes this is clearly me dissociating because I'm unhappy with/in my body.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Powerful, Dissociation, and Manic.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/4/20

12. I Am Me (#15), 10/24/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I remember this song!!! I remember this song so clearly! I remember writing this song and saying "This is IT! This is the trans anthem I was trying to write!" But then I never did anything with it because I couldn't figure out how to rewrite it into something more powerful, and then I forgot about it. Now I'm listening again and it's like woah. Time to bring this back!

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Don't tell me that I don't exist.	<i>Aggressive, Honesty.</i>
Don't tell me that I shouldn't.	<i>Pointed.</i>
Don't tell me that my pronoun doesn't exist.	<i>Aggressive, Honesty.</i>
Don't tell me that I'm not entitled to it.	<i>Pointed.</i>
Unless you've lived my life. Unless you've lived my life. Don't tell me who I am. Don't tell me who I am.	<i>Upset, Repeating to get the point across.</i>
Unless you've lived my life. Unless you've lived my life. Don't tell me who I am. Don't tell me who I am.	<i>Upset, Repeating to get the point across.</i>
I am- I am me. I am- I am me. I am- I am me and that is okay. That is okay.	<i>Powerful, Affirming, Beautiful.</i>

If you don't agree with who I am just get out of my life.	<i>Aggressive, Straightforward.</i>
If you don't agree with who I am then get out of my way.	<i>Powerful, Pointed.</i>
Cause I am- I am me. I am beautiful.	<i>Affirming, Self-Love.</i>
I am- I am me. And I am beautiful.	<i>Affirming, Self-Love.</i>
I am- I am me. And I am wonderful.	<i>Affirming, Self-Love.</i>
I am- I am me. And I am perfect.	<i>Affirming, Self-Love.</i>
I am- I am me. And I am beautiful.	<i>Affirming, Self-Love.</i>
I am- I am me. And I am beautiful and you will never ever. You will <i>never, ever</i> . You could never ever touch me.	<i>Powerful.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I really do love this song. I hope I do something with this song someday, but for now it has given me good themes!

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Affirming, Self-Love, and Honesty.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/4/20

****Song Skipped: I'm Here (#16). Reason - Based on specific theme - Not true improvisation.***

One listen theme thought: Halloween*

13. Ground Was Cold (#17), 11/7/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I didn't really like this immediately, but by the end I loved it. There were some great ideas that came up with this, and some good emotions. This date was important once, and this would have been a very emotional date that I wrote this song. In its melancholy, it's very inspiring. I don't feel sad for the person being haunted, but empowered by

their ability to sing about it and say “I’ll be every single thing without you” even as the ghost is around them, bothering them.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

The sky is gray and cloudy.	<i>Observant.</i>
And on your grave: A memorial to [unintelligible]. You were brave, you stayed.	<i>Commending.</i>
You stayed.	<i>Repetition.</i>
And I know you’re out there, somewhere, haunting me.	<i>Factual, Fearful, Provoking.</i>
I can feel your ghost surround me. Telling me who would it be. Who would it be?	<i>Melancholy.</i>
And I know. And I know that you’ll see. You’ll see.	<i>Sure.</i>
You’re walking through that wall. You’re haunting me.	<i>Enigma, See-through, Truth existing.</i>
You left me when the ground was cold.	<i>Reminiscing, Sadness.</i>
It’s cold again now, or so I’m told.	<i>Expressive.</i>
I can’t feel anything without you.	<i>Depressing.</i>
But I’ll be every single thing without you.	<i>Melancholic.</i>
And you’re walking through that wall. I feel you haunting me.	<i>Invisible, Expressive, Metaphoric.</i>
And you’re walking through that wall. I see you there shaking your head at me.	<i>Disappointed.</i>
Saying “Don’t forget me.”	<i>Memory.</i>
Saying “Don’t forget me.”	<i>Loss.</i>
Saying “Don’t let me die.”	<i>Rest, Forgiveness, Moving On.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: The ending of this song is really fascinating to me. I really like it. I like the idea that it ends with the ghost asking not to be forgotten; Knowing he won't but probably in truth (based on the situation and the emotions in my voice) knowing very well he'll always be a ghost roaming the halls in the house of my heart. Even if he lies dormant forever, he'll never be forgotten.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Melancholic, Metaphoric,** and **Moving On.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/5/2020

14. I feel Not Okay (#18), 11/14/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I loved this so much after listening to it that I immediately went and downloaded it and posted it on my main Facebook and Instagram because it's a REALLY good song, and very meaningful.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I hate that I have a cold. I hate that I'm sick.	<i>Despair.</i>
I hate that my voice sounds like this.	<i>Distress.</i>
I hate that these pants aren't fitting the way that they used to, because I gained weight.	<i>Getting Older, Fear, Disappointment.</i>
I hate that I haven't been into the gym in a month.	<i>Disappointment.</i>
Mostly because I've been sick and dealing with stuff.	<i>Distracted.</i>
I hate that I have to go to work when I'd rather just be home.	<i>Introverted.</i>
I hate. I hate. I hate. I hate, and:	<i>Hatred, Distress, Despair.</i>
I also hate the chord progression to this song.	<i>Feeling of Failure.</i>
I really don't like having to play it at all.	<i>Unamused.</i>

I really wish that I could sleep but I have to go and teach.	<i>Disinterested.</i>
I hate that I have to go. I hate that I'm running late.	<i>Late.</i>
I hate that I'm going to feel like I'm rushing and like I'm going on a date.	<i>Unprepared.</i>
I had to cancel a few dates this last week, because my voice gave out after singing really loudly.	<i>Sickness, Upset.</i>
And that was only because the microphone gave out at the venue.	<i>Circumstantial, Pissed.</i>
They told me that they'd fix it, and then it just kept crackling.	<i>Pissed.</i>
And I was already losing my voice at that point. I mean it probably would have gone no matter what, but I had to do the show.	<i>Sickness, Upset.</i>
And I hate. And I hate, and I hate.	<i>Despair.</i>
And I hate the chord progression to this song. It's just so repetitive.	<i>Feeling of Failure, Bored.</i>
I hate. I HATE that I have to sing along to it.	<i>Tired.</i>
And I hate that I feel today. I really don't like myself right now, and that's not okay.	<i>Self-Esteem, Issues, Mental Health.</i>
I usually love myself. I'm really proud of myself. I've accomplished so much since last year.	<i>Hope, Pride, Happiness.</i>
And I know that I'll get over this and my voice will get better, and I'll get a job that I like more than being here; But:	<i>Hope, Pride, Looking Forward.</i>
For now I'm here and I'm thinking about going to work tomorrow. Having to go to that cafe. Say: "Oh hey. Oh hey. How are you? Welcome!"	<i>Depressed, Bitter.</i>
And give them drinks that I don't care about.	<i>Truth.</i>

I really wish that I could go to bed, only for just right now.	<i>Wishing.</i>
But I'm gonna be late to work again.	<i>Giving up.</i>
And I really hate myself, my friends.	<i>Sad.</i>
And my hair is thinning and I look like I'm going bald. And that's not the case it just looks that way.	<i>Disgusted.</i>
Mostly because I haven't washed it and I have to go pick up some medicine, and I feel really, really, really, really not okay.	<i>Dirty, Honest, Sad.</i>
I feel really, really, really, really, really, really not okay.	<i>Sad, Depressed, Hopeless.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I really feel so good when I listen to this song. Not as a feeling of laughter toward who I was or being upset about it; Not in a way of bitter anguish toward my past; Not in a rude way at all. I laugh and smile when I listen to this because this is who I was. I remember this moment. I remember this day. I do Patreon as a journal, as a way to help me process, as a way to look back when I'm older and remember things I may have forgotten. This song is so perfectly within the reasons I started doing this, and it's so nice to listen to. It's my heart.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Sad, Disappointment, and Hope.**

~Travis Love Benson 2/17/20 1:36 P.M.

15. Maybe Some Day (#19), 11/21/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I remember when I wrote this because I was upset that day. I was thinking about how I was not as good as the people I look up to in the music world,

and I sometimes still feel that way, but I'm not them and I don't want to be them so it doesn't matter.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

I wish that I could be like Kimya Dawson and write a song that everyone likes and sings along with. Yeah, they sing along with.	<i>Wishing, Change, Distress.</i>
I wish that I could be like Ingrid Michaelson and have the songwriting capabilities to rhyme and have something interesting to say all the time.	<i>Longing.</i>
I wish that I could be like Boy George and have a voice of gold.	<i>Wishing.</i>
I wish that I could be like Ezra Furman and know what I'm saying when I am singing what I am told.	<i>Wanting.</i>
And one day maybe I will sing a song that sways and audience to sing along.	<i>Hopeful, Dreaming.</i>
Maybe one day I'll write a tune that's so catchy that nobody else knows what to do except sing it too.	<i>Excited.</i>
Maybe someday I'll be great.	<i>Pride, Excitement.</i>
I wish I could be like Paul Baribeau and sing about how I feel. I wish that I could talk about my ex-girlfriend and that I'd know it's real.	<i>Depressed, Crying, Sad.</i>
I wish that I could be really sad for ten years and then write a bunch of songs and then form them and get so rich and famous off of them that I can retire and spend the rest of my life in the Pacific Northwest. Nobody knowing where I am and:	<i>Bitter.</i>
I wish that I could be like Elvis Presley, I wish that I could be the king of rock. Even though he stole that title from someone that's much better.	<i>Thinking out loud, Stream of consciousness.</i>

I wish that I could be like Kurt Cobain and sing my heart out. Wish that I had a soul that deep and explosive, without dying though and	<i>Tongue-in-Cheek.</i>
Maybe one day I'll be able to write a song that people understand. Write a song that people comprehend.	<i>Excited.</i>
Maybe someday I'll write a tune that gets stuck in people's heads and they have no other choice than to sing along with me.	<i>Captivating, Hoping, Wishing.</i>
Maybe someday.	<i>Hope.</i>
But not today.	<i>Despair.</i>
And I never know just how I'm feeling. I never know just how I'm feeling. I never know just how I'm feeling. I never know just how I'm feeling.	<i>Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I never know just how I'm feeling. I never know just how exactly I'm feeling. I never know just how to feel. I never know feelings.	<i>Sing-speaking, Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I never know how I feel.	<i>Sing-speaking, Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I don't know how I feel. I don't know how I-	<i>Sing-speaking, Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I don't know how I feel I don't know how to feel.	<i>Sing-speaking, Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I- I- I- I never know just how I'm feeling I don't know how to feel.	<i>Sing-speaking, Repetitive, Manic.</i>
I never know just how I'm feeling I don't know how to feel.	<i>Despair.</i>
I never know just how I'm feeling I don't know how to feel.	<i>Restless.</i>
I never know just how I'm feeling I don't know how to feel.	<i>Quick, Restless, Manic.</i>
Maybe someday I'll write some words that make sense in a line. Something people will think in time.	<i>Excited.</i>

And maybe one day I'll write a tune that gets stuck in people's heads and they won't know what to do with it.	<i>Resolute, Goal-Oriented, Driven.</i>
Maybe someday. Not today.	<i>Realistic.</i>
Maybe someday. Maybe someday.	<i>Worried, Hopeful.</i>
Maybe someday.	<i>Hopeful.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I love when I do improv that is so stream of consciousness within improv that there's this underlying beauty of truth even within words that don't rhyme and thoughts that don't finish. Life isn't so clean as to think that every storyline is concise and will come to an end in a beautiful and romantic way. Sometimes things just end. This song feels like that. It's all these hopes, and fears, and thoughts, and worries I had when I was in this spiral of depression and then the song doesn't resolve. I keep crying. The recording ends but my life has gone on. It's fascinating.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Wishing, Wanting, and Hopeful.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/17/20, 1:49 P.M.

***Song Skipped: Forlorn (#20). Reason - Not improvisation. One listen theme thought:**

Harvest*

Song Skipped: Our Harvest Song (#21). Reason - Not improvisation. One listen theme thought: *Harvest*

Song Skipped: All the Clutter (#22). Reason - Not improvisation. One listen theme thought: *Cleaning/Growth*

Autumn 2018 Song Themes: Introspective, Honest, Cyclical, Emotional, Worried, Lost, Curious, Creative, Melancholy, Powerful, Dissociation, Manic, Affirming, Self-Love, Honesty,

Melancholic, Metaphoric, Moving On, Sad, Disappointment, Hope, Wishing, Wanting, and Hopeful.

Autumn 2018 Overall Main Themes: Melancholic, Honest, and Hopeful.

I chose these based on similarities between themes and how many times certain words appeared.

I also chose these based upon the overall feeling all of the songs gave me for this season. I think these three words best describe the emotional state in which I found myself during this period of time in my life, and I will write a song based around these feelings for my song cycle.

~Travis Love Benson 2/17/20, 1:55 P.M.

16. Creativity (#23), 12/26/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: This isn't my favorite improv I've done, but I respect it as the "I'm getting back into doing improv after taking a break because I've been so busy, but I need to do this for you." In reality I need to do it for me, but I use others as the catalyst to do something for myself; Which I've definitely always been like that. Finding ways to put myself first while convincing myself it's for others is important.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I haven't been feeling that creative recently.	<i>Honesty.</i>
I think it might be because I've been so busy.	<i>Projection, Avoidance.</i>
And it's not due to lack of trying. It's not due to depression.	<i>Wonder if this is true.</i>
I've been feeling pretty great as of late.	<i>Sounds like I'm lying.</i>
And I know, I know I'm a little late with this song but	<i>Upset.</i>
Let's celebrate the fact that I'm back and forcing myself to write for you. I'm forcing myself to write for-	<i>Sounds bitter.</i>
And I know- And I know that the sky will go	<i>Avoidance.</i>

on forever.	
The days will turn into the night. The nights will turn into mornings.	<i>Time, Fast moving.</i>
The mornings will grow, and fade, and grow, and fade.	<i>Impatient.</i>
And I'll still be here. And I'll still be here. I'll still be playing every song I can for you.	<i>Giving, and Giving, Emotional.</i>
I haven't been feeling that creative recently.	<i>Honesty.</i>
I think it's mostly due to the fact that I've been so busy.	<i>Troubled.</i>
I've had a lot of gigs recently, and I've put out two albums.	<i>Bittersweet, Excitement.</i>
One of them's on Spotify right now.	<i>Promotion.</i>
And I've been feeling really good about that. Been living off the high of that.	<i>Stressed, Anxious.</i>
I have another gig on Friday in New York City.	<i>Anxiety.</i>
I got my music on a podcast that I really like. What about that?	<i>Love.</i>
Isn't that enough for me? No.	<i>Honesty.</i>
'Cuz I have to write. And like the days turn into nights. And those nights turn into mornings bright. And those mornings to days, and those days into nights.	<i>Long-winded.</i>
I'll be here writing songs for you just like I said I would.	<i>Promise.</i>
And that's the way it has to be. So I'm forcing myself to be a little creativity.	<i>No other way.</i>
I'm forcing myself to C-R-E-A-T-I-V-I-T-Y- I can't spell the word. Let's try again.	<i>Anxious, Lost, Silly.</i>
I'm forcing myself to be C-R-E-A-T-I-V-I-T-Y. Why?	<i>Spelling it out, Exasperated.</i>

Because I need to be.	<i>Forced, Stressed.</i>
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Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I feel like I was manic about the holidays when I wrote this, and the need to catch up on music and be creative. I always feel behind, in everything. I work at one pace and my brain works at a completely different one.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Avoidance, Stressed,** and **Honesty.** ~Travis Love Benson 2/17/20, 3:47 P.M.

17. How Can I Be Happy (#24), 12/26/18

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: Something that I really like with my improv songwriting as I notice myself grow and change is that I tend to take negative emotions and thoughts and make them into positive, hopeful thoughts. I never want to bog people down or bog myself down with the idea that the world is miserable or unfair without bringing in the fact that things can definitely be okay.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

It's been one year.	<i>Time passing.</i>
It's been one year, one month, and a few days. Maybe a week or two.	<i>But who's counting, right?</i>
Maybe a week since I've seen you.	<i>I wonder how long it's been now, Thoughtful.</i>
Ssssssssssss.	<i>Thinking, Processing.</i>
It's been one year.	<i>Time passing.</i>
Next year it'll be two years.	<i>Truth hurts, Time moves on, Things keep changing.</i>
After that it'll be three, four, five, six, seven. When will it end?	<i>Time doesn't stop, Wondering, Hurt, Worried.</i>
It won't end and I'm happy.	<i>Hope</i>

And I'm happy.	<i>Repeat, Hope</i>
And I'm happy.	<i>Repeat, Hope</i>
Because I've been growing a lot.	<i>Pride, Excitement, Self-love.</i>
Not for you, but for me.	<i>Self-love, excitement.</i>
Not so you could ever see the growth. I've made those changes to my mind and body.	<i>Affirming, Self-love, Proud.</i>
I've been growing for me.	<i>Pride.</i>
And I'm happy finally.	<i>Happiness.</i>
And I'm happy finally.	<i>Happiness.</i>
And I'm happy finally.	<i>Happiness.</i>
But happiness is a thing that has to keep changing and evolving.	<i>Honesty, True to Self, Growth Change.</i>
Happiness can't be a stagnant moment in time.	<i>Growth, Change, Existential.</i>
And if you really think about it, we have to keep moving forward.	<i>Change, Goal-Oriented.</i>
We have to constantly change our goals, and ambitions in life in order to be happy.	<i>Goal-Oriented, Change, Growth.</i>
In order to be happy.	<i>Hope, Expression.</i>
We can't just stay where we are. We can't keep who we are.	<i>Expression, Beliefs.</i>
Every day we'll change.	<i>Beliefs.</i>
And in those moments of change we need to rediscover who we are and say:	<i>Finding, Lost, Wondering.</i>
“What can I do to help myself today? What can I do to make myself happy? What can I do to help myself today? What can I do to be happy?”	<i>Questioning, Wondering, Hopefulness.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I like that the song ends on questions that I ask myself every day still. “What can I do to help myself today?” “What can I do to make myself happy?” I need to keep asking myself these, and sometimes it’s harder because I ignore my needs for to get work done or help others, but I need to worry about me, and love me, and always put myself first. It’s hard sometimes.

I’m thinking the *main themes* based on what I’ve heard/written are **Time Passing, Happiness, Change, and Hope.**

~Travis Love Benson, 2/17/20, 4:39 P.M.

18. I love this one I don’t have a name for it (#25), 1/3/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I remember writing this one, and I remember loving it at the time. I remember those feelings so specifically because I thought “This is going to be something someday. I can tell.” It didn’t end up becoming a song I would rewrite and perform, but it now is part of my thesis so I guess I was technically correct!

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Oooh. Ooh-Ooh. Ooh-Ooh. There are many- There are many simple things.	<i>Thoughtful.</i>
There are many simple things in the world.	<i>Introspective.</i>
There are many- There are many ugly things.	<i>Thoughtful.</i>
There are many- So many ugly things in the world.	<i>Introspective.</i>
And this song is one. But not you.	<i>Romantic.</i>
And the sky is one. But not you.	<i>Respectful.</i>
There are many- There are many beautiful things.	<i>Thoughtful.</i>
There are many beautiful things in the world.	<i>Introspective.</i>

There are many- There are many marvelous things in the world. In the world.	<i>Beauty, Creation.</i>
A graveyard is one.	<i>Death, Decay, New Life.</i>
That bridge that we used to run on.	<i>Exploring, Adventurous.</i>
The playground where we used to play every day.	<i>Fun, Youth, Memories.</i>
But not you.	<i>Wondering.</i>
But not you.	<i>Exploring.</i>
But not you.	<i>Directive.</i>
But not you.	<i>Aggressive.</i>
But not you.	<i>Honest.</i>
You are beautiful, and wonderful, and marvelous, and magnificent, and- and-	<i>Romantic, Beautiful, Meaningful?</i>
Not you- Ooh-Ooh. Ooh-ooh.	<i>Pointed.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Truthfully I'm not sure how I feel about this one now. It is all over the place thematically, and I'm not sure who I'm singing about. I know that this is an improv, and I know that I was thinking of somebody; But I can't tell if I think highly of them or not. It's almost like I am trying to like someone but can't decide if I do, which may be closer to the truth than I think. It's very likely this is related to something more toxic and the journey that comes with trying to like someone when you shouldn't. I'm not sure.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Thoughtful, Romantic, and Introspective.**

~Travis Love Benson 2/17/20, 5:19 P.M.

***Song Skipped: (G)old Hands (#26). Reason - Not improvisation. One listen theme thought:**

Despondent*

19. I Don't Know (#30), 2/7/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I remember this song! It was about a year ago now which is crazy for me. I remember crying when I wrote this. Up until now most of what I've been doing was in 2018 but this was during grad school that I wrote this, though before I got my current job. I remember, and looking ahead at the songs to come this season and in the month of February I remember, that this month has always been hard for me (not as much this year!) but especially in 2019. I was feeling stagnant, and alone. Now I feel full of love and light, but that's what growth does to someone, I suppose?

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

How am I feeling? You ask me that.	<i>Questioning, Defeated.</i>
How am I feeling? I'll tell you I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
How are you feeling? You ask me that.	<i>Distressed.</i>
How am I feeling? I tell you I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
"What can I do to make things better?" You ask me that. I don't know.	<i>Unresponsive, Depressed.</i>
"What can I do to make things better?" You ask me that. I don't know.	<i>Repeating, Unresponsive, Depressed.</i>
You ask me that. I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
What can I do to make you see you are beautiful? I don't know.	<i>I don't believe you.</i>
What can I do to tell you that you're great? You're everything! I don't know.	<i>I don't believe you.</i>
What can I do to show you that your music is important? I don't know.	<i>Untrue.</i>
What can I do to show you that people love you? I don't know.	<i>Lost, Depressed.</i>
You ask me that and I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>

You tell me that and I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
What can I do to keep you from crying when you sing? I don't know.	<i>Depressed, Emotional.</i>
What can I do to show you that you are everything? I don't know.	<i>Rejecting.</i>
What can I do to tell you that people care? I don't know.	<i>Loneliness.</i>
What can I do to tell you that love is everywhere? I don't know.	<i>Unfeeling.</i>
You ask me that and I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
You tell me that and I don't know.	<i>Lost.</i>
What can I do to show you that I love you? I say "I don't know."	<i>Alone.</i>
What can I do to show you that I love you? I say "I know... I do. I know."	<i>Potential hope.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I like that the song ends with the potential that there could be hope that comes out of this song after all. I loved this song when I wrote it and wanted to go back and use it in an album, but I ended up using it for a music therapy songwriting experience instead.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Lost, Depressed, and Alone.**

20. I Am Really Sad Today (#31), 2/12/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: Hoo. That was a lot of emotion. I guess I was really sad this day. I'm currently (3/6/20) feeling incredible, so this was upsetting to me to find out I was in such a bad place. I knew I was, I remember being so, but wow.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact,</i>
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	<i>giving up, disappointed.</i>
I can't even think straight.	<i>Confused, lost, distressed.</i>
My head is buzzing and I feel strange.	<i>Mental illness, tired</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I can't even eat.	<i>Repulsed</i>
I made a really good chili today but my stomach can't hold it. Okay.	<i>Unappetized.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I need to go and brush my teeth.	<i>Honest, distressed, sad.</i>
It would be the second time this week.	<i>Honest, sad.</i>
I need to shower and wash this filth clean.	<i>Good lyricism.</i>
Oh, I need to brush my teeth.	<i>I would spend time wallowing in my own filth literally when I was depressed.</i>
I need to be all clean.	<i>Missing, Looking back.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Not FEELING it.</i>
I got locked out of doing my homework again, apparently.	<i>Upset.</i>
I had films that I didn't fill out in time.	<i>Moving on, don't care, whatever.</i>

I guess that I'll just not get my homework done and I'll fail out of grad school.	<i>Self-defeating.</i>
And fail out of grad school.	<i>Self-defeating.</i>
I- I am free.	<i>Bitter.</i>
I- I am fine.	<i>Fooling.</i>
I- I am not a guy no matter what they tell me.	<i>TELL IT, Honest, truth, angry, gender.</i>
I am misgendered constantly.	<i>TELL IT, Honest, truth, angr, gender.</i>
I am sad and I am lonely.	<i>Distressed, self-hating.</i>
I am fairly sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Matter-of-fact, coming to terms with the fact, giving up, disappointed.</i>
My parents getting in my way as I play.	<i>Projecting.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I am really sad today.	<i>Lost.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I think that there's something to be said about how honest I am in the songs that I improv. It's almost too vulnerable at times, but I think that's why others like it. It's all I know. I just wanna be honest with people. I really like that gender identity comes up in these songs. It's really hard to be sometimes.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Matter-of-Fact**, **Self-Defeating**, and **Lost**.

~Travis Love Benson, 3/6/20 5:47 P.M.

21. I Can't See the Sky Anymore (#32), 2/21/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I forgot that this song and Universally Accepted ended up having the same strum pattern. I LOVED the chorus to this song, but I ended up deciding Universally Accepted was the song that needed to be finished “more” than this song. I really do love the chorus. Wonder if someday I’ll be able to do anything with it.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

And I remember when you were young. How fun it would be to laugh until the midday sun.	<i>Memory, Story, Orange, Sunset colors, a lot of yellows.</i>
We would go walking out on the street. We would have a good time. We would have a little bite to eat.	<i>Greens and yellows, a light blue at the end, happy memories, vague shadows.</i>
We would go until the sun went down.	<i>Orange, running, footsteps, emotional</i>
We would go until the sun went down.	<i>Orange, memories, cuddling</i>
Will you tell me why I can't see the sky anymore?	<i>Gray, blue, green, depressed, lost, distressed</i>
Will you tell me why I can't see the sky anymore?	<i>Gray, blue, green, depressed, lost, distressed.</i>
I can't see the sky!	<i>Red, angry, upset, confused.</i>
I can't see the sky!	<i>Red, angry, upset, disappointed.</i>
Do you remember when you were 23? You ran away to college and you left me.	<i>Orange, yellow, green, memories, sad.</i>
Do you remember when I was 25? I had the whole world ahead of me. I thought I was really alive.	<i>Blue, Red, Purple, excited, missed opportunities.</i>
Do you remember when I was 33? When I told you I loved you and that I knew you loved me?	<i>Red, excited, tongue-in-cheek, happy.</i>
Do you remember when I was 69? And then we laughed, and then we had a good time.	<i>Red, laughing, happy, ready.</i>
I can't see the sky anymore.	<i>Blue, gray, green, distressed.</i>

I can't see the sky anymore.	<i>Blue, gray, green, blind, lost.</i>
I can't see the sky.	<i>Red, disappointed, upset.</i>
I can't see the sky.	<i>Green, confused.</i>
Oh no, no! I can't see the sky!	<i>Blue, sad, lost.</i>
I can't see the sky.	<i>Blue, gray, green, disappointed.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: God I'd forgotten how aggressively emotional I was when I improvised this. I remember crying right after the song finished. I remember spending time thinking it was a very important song, and in many ways it is. A lot of songs don't make the cut and turn into songs I perform; But some songs turn into great memories. I really do love this song. I haven't written a melody like that since, so I'd love to bring it back some day. For some reason this song evokes colors for me in a very real sense, so I wrote down what colors each line brought me.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Emotional, Lost, Depressed, Orange, Gray, and Memories.**

~Travis Love Benson, 3/6/20, 6:13 P.M.

22. Universally Accepted. (#33), 2/28/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: "The album that this goes on is going to be be fantastic" - My description on Patreon. I've always loved this song. To come back and listen now made me cry. To just know I felt so strongly that this song came out naturally and then turned into what it is on the album, and what I do with it live. Just incredible. Same strum from I Can't See the Sky Anymore, but completely different feel. "Huh. Good job" I say at the end. Incredible job, me.

*Lyrics**Feelings/Themes*

I woke up. A product of my creation.	<i>Disappointed.</i>
I woke up. Another day in this life.	<i>Given up.</i>
I woke up. Waking up is hard to do sometimes.	<i>Honesty, Depression, Mental health.</i>
I woke up. What did I find?	<i>Confusion, Lost, Wonder.</i>
My mom is proud of me. My dad is proud of me. My life is proud of me. But am I proud of me?	<i>Disappointed, whose opinion matters most?</i>
My mom is proud of me. My dad is proud of me. My life is proud of me. But am I proud of-	<i>Self-love is important, lost, questioning.</i>
I am a product of my creation.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I am exactly who I'm supposed to be.	<i>Unhappy.</i>
I am universally accepted as a man.	<i>Disgusted, gender.</i>
But I am not happy.	<i>Truth.</i>
Maybe it's my mid-20's. Maybe I'm going through some quarter-life crisis.	<i>Denial, Projection, Defense.</i>
Maybe one day I'll wake up and be fine with:	<i>Hope, Disgust.</i>
Everything around me staying the same for years on end.	<i>Disappointment.</i>
Maybe I'll learn to live a life.	<i>Hope.</i>
But I am not happy against the thought that I'll be stuck in the same job for 30 years.	<i>Honesty.</i>
And I am not happy with the thought that one day I will wake up and be 70 years old.	<i>Disappointed, scared.</i>
And I am a product of my creation.	<i>Proud.</i>
I am exactly who I'm supposed to be.	<i>Distressed.</i>
And I am universally accepted as a man.	<i>Disgust, gender.</i>

But why then? Why am I not happy?	<i>Tell me why.</i>
When will I be happy?	<i>Questioning, hoping.</i>
When will I be happy?	<i>Questioning, hoping.</i>
When will I be happy?	<i>Questioning, hoping.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: There was a lot of bitterness and disgust in my voice due to the fact that I was discussing how I'm accepted as a man, but that's not who I am. It pisses me off when I'm misgendered. If you've never been misgendered before it sucks. I don't recommend it. I'm really glad that gender has been coming up in themes more. It's a part of who I am so it'd be a part of all of the songs I write for this thesis regardless, so like Stream-of-Consciousness, Good Lyricism, and other factors that are part of what I do; Gender and Identity don't need to become main themes.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Disgust, Questioning, and Hope.**

Winter 2018/2019 Song Themes: Avoidance, Stressed, Honesty, Time Passing, Happiness, Change, Hope, Thoughtful, Romantic, Introspective, Lost, Depressed, Alone, Matter-of-Fact, Self-Defeating, Lost, Emotional, Lost, Depressed, Orange, Gray, Memories, Disgust, Questioning, and Hope.

Winter 2018/2019 Overall Main Themes: Lost, Depressed, and Hope.

At the end of the day I always had hope. Even when things sucked. Even during the I Can't See the Sky Anymore I always felt that things would get better. And they have. I tell myself good things, I write the songs I write, I do what I do because I know things will get better. I have to believe that.

~Travis Love Benson 3/6/2020, 8:02 P.M.

23. Another Tuesday Afternoon (#34), 3/19/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: “People expect too much of me, or maybe I expect too much of myself” is the REALEST. I’m in a very similar place this March. I’m wondering if these cycles always happen but I just see each one a bit differently each year.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Another unsufferable Tuesday afternoon.	<i>Dispising, Disgusted.</i>
I have to go to choir again tonight,	<i>Introverted, Uninterested.</i>
Or I shouldn’t say again because this is the first time I’ve gone this year.	<i>Uninterested, Passive, Disgusted.</i>
They expect me to know everything crystal clear.	<i>Unlearned, No THANKS, Tired.</i>
I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.	<i>Lost.</i>
I don’t know what I’m supposed to do.	<i>Confused.</i>
People expect too much of me, or maybe I expect too much of myself.	<i>Honesty.</i>
People expect too much of me, or maybe I expect too much of myself.	<i>Honesty.</i>
My mom is disappointed in me once again.	<i>Whatever.</i>
I crashed my car for the first time in my entire life.	<i>Pissed off.</i>
She says that she’ll always be better at driving than me.	<i>Complaining.</i>
I guess I have to believe her.	<i>Shrug, over it.</i>
But people expect too much of me, oh mommy I expect too much of myself.	<i>Honesty.</i>
People expect too much of me, but maybe I expect too much of myself.	<i>Honesty.</i>
Now I’m sitting here. Wondering. And that’s about it.	<i>Lost in thoughts, ruminating.</i>

Now I'm sitting here. And I'm thinking about it.	<i>Ruminating.</i>
I'm thinking about it.	<i>Ruminating.</i>
I'm thinking about it.	<i>Ruminating.</i>
I'm thinkin- About it.	<i>Ruminating.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I remember writing this, because it was the same day I wrote Spring Time in New Mexico. It's really cool hearing this again and realizing I feel some of this now and it's almost spring again.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Honesty, Disgusted, and Ruminating.**

~Travis Love Benson 3/6/20, 9:02 P.M.

24. Spring Time in New Mexico (#35), 3/24/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I remember recording this in front of my friend Røy and having him afterwards say "Why did you choose New Mexico, and then Georgia, and the New York?" and I said "I dunno it's just what came out, why?" and he said "I have a very specific memory involving New Mexico, then Georgia, then New York in that order. Have I ever told you?" and I said "No!" and he proceeded to change the subject and never tell me the story.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Spring is in the air in New Mexico again.	<i>Storytelling, Scene Setting,</i>
The cactuses are bloomin' again, again, again, again, again.	<i>Repetition, World-building.</i>
It was cold for a while. It's always cold at night here.	<i>Passive, Whatever.</i>
Now it's warm again, it's warm again, it's	<i>Excited, Repetition.</i>

warm again.	
New Mexico is insufferable in the summertime.	<i>Matter-of-fact.</i>
But while we have a chance let's go outside.	<i>Exploring, Whimsy</i>
Cause soon it'll be too hot for us to think.	<i>Disappointed.</i>
I really really want to go anywhere that's not my home.	<i>Exploring</i>
Springtime is bloomin' here in Georgia.	<i>Scene Setting</i>
Peaches are growin' on the trees.	<i>World-building</i>
And everywhere you look, people are outside again.	<i>Story</i>
I mean it's not like they weren't, but now they are even more and:	<i>Explaining.</i>
Pretty soon it'll be summertime and it'll be too hot to go outside. Hot to go outside.	<i>Disappointed.</i>
So walk with me while we have the time, cause soon it'll be too hot to go outside. Hot to go outside.	<i>Excited, Exploring.</i>
Spring is bloomin' here in New York.	<i>Scene Setting.</i>
The frost is still on the cars for now, although it seems like it'll be a hot summer at least from what I can tell.	<i>World Building, Predicting.</i>
Because it really wasn't that cold that year, this year, this year.	<i>Explaining, Repetition.</i>
Pretty soon it'll be too hot to go outside here in New York.	<i>Disappointed.</i>
I know that seems contradictory because it's always cold.	<i>Explaining.</i>
But we have something that New Mexico and Georgia don't have.	<i>Excited.</i>
And that's each other and also all this snow.	<i>Romantic, Funny.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I really like this song as a cute little love song, and it was an improv, but I'm interested in how these themes affect the rest of this season since this wasn't about my own feelings in an obvious way like my other songs, and was more a story song about something else.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Scene Setting, Explaining,** and **Exploring.**

In this period I was very focused on recording and releasing my album that released on June 1st, 2019, and finishing my first semester of graduate school. I didn't realize until doing this project that I didn't release in this season. I wrote so much in this season that never made it on to Patreon, but I can't consider those improvisations as this is based around what I posted on Patreon. There are some songs I released in July that I had recorded in the Spring, and I will be considering those.

25. Before I came out, or, A song for my mom. (#36), 6/12/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening:

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Before I came out as gay I told you that I liked guys.	<i>Confrontation, Discussion, Honesty, Truth</i>
Before I came out as gay I had a boyfriend double my age.	<i>Disappointment, Description</i>
And before I came out- Out as gay. You told me that you didn't like the way he looked at me.	<i>Worried, Honest, Disappointment</i>
You told me "Please. Hey. Will you date someone else?"	<i>Disgust, Pressure</i>
And I was in love. I was in love. I was in love with my first boyfriend.	<i>False, Dreaming, Lost</i>
I was in love. I was in love. I was in love with	<i>False, Dreaming, Lost</i>

my first boyfriend.	
And then he killed himself. He told me that he would.	<i>Passive, Nonchalant</i>
Then he killed himself. Because I was 16 and told him I had to move on.	<i>Nonchalant, Unphased</i>
Then he killed himself unrelated to me.	<i>Passive</i>
I don't blame myself. How could I? He killed himself when I was 23.	<i>Decided, Sure</i>
Before I came out as trans you told me that you'd never accept me as a woman.	<i>Disappointment, Truth, Honesty</i>
I'm not a woman though.	<i>Truth</i>
Before I came out as trans you told me that you wouldn't use my pronouns. My pronouns are they/them.	<i>Disappointment, Truth, Honesty, Pride</i>
And then you told me to cut my hair. You said it would look so much better shorter.	<i>Disgust, Despised</i>
And then every time that I'd mention it was falling out you'd tell me it'll look good.	<i>Lying</i>
You promise me it will.	<i>Lying</i>
But I'll never fucking cut my hair just cause you told me.	<i>Power, Aggression, Strength</i>
Fucking cut my hair just cause you told me to.	<i>Anger</i>
I haven't cut it in five years. What makes you think I'll start now?	<i>Aggression, Honesty</i>
Oh, when I- When I came out.	<i>Quizzical, Reminiscing</i>
When I- I came out.	<i>Reminiscing</i>
I'm sorry I'm so confused.	<i>Lost, Stressed</i>
I'm sorry I don't know who I am.	<i>Worried</i>
But yet I do- I do- I do- I know who I am.	<i>Unsure, Wondering, Lying?, Lost</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I'm interested in the main themes, because this song was all over the place. I'm actually not a huge fan of this song, but I understand the aggression toward my mom here because she is a wonderful mom but sometimes she's so ignorant with things like pronouns and correct word use. Old moms.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Disappointment, Lost, and Aggression.**

26. Heaven is a State of Mind (#37), 5/20/19 (Released 7/10/19)

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: Damn how did I forget about this song??? I LOVE this song. One of my proudest improvs that I never did anything with. UGH that GUITAR PART. Alright this made me feel really good after the last one.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

There was a lamp outside and it was glowin' glowin' bright.	<i>Description.</i>
And I looked into the light and I swear I saw heaven.	<i>Belief, Holy, Bright.</i>
There was a moon in the sky. There was a great big moon a shinin' bright.	<i>Description.</i>
And when I looked into it I swear I saw heaven.	<i>Belief, Holy, Bright.</i>
But heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
And heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
Heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
It's not a place. It's not a destination.	<i>Descriptive, Answer.</i>
I swear one day when I get old	<i>Wondering</i>
I'll look into my ancient old eyes in a mirror	<i>Description.</i>
And I will say "You've lived a good life"	<i>Hope</i>

But that's assuming that I'll get old.	<i>Worry, Wonder</i>
That I won't die or get bored.	<i>Honesty</i>
That I will grow and I will learn how to live with the silences of life.	<i>Hope</i>
Heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
Heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
Heaven is a state of mind. It's not a destination.	<i>Descriptive, Answer.</i>
Heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
Heaven is a state of mind.	<i>Reassuring, Belief</i>
Heaven is a state of mind. It's not a destination.	<i>Descriptive, Answer.</i>
It's not a place I can find.	<i>Lost,</i>
It's not a destination. A point on a map in time.	<i>Answer.</i>
It's not a destination. It's a state of mind.	<i>Answer.</i>
Spoken: "And I just come up with stuff like that." Other voice: "Yeah, that's pretty good."	<i>Reassuring.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Very straightforward theme here. Nice!

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Belief, Answer, and Descriptive.**

27. Oh, the Wind Blows (#38), 3/18/19 (Released 7/10/19)

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: The chord progression is so happy and jaunty! And the lyrics are whatever until the end when my voice drops like an OCTAVE and I sing "down".

Spooky! I love it!

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Oh, the wind blows.	<i>Observing, jaunty.</i>
Oh, the wind blows.	<i>Noting, jaunty.</i>
Oh, the wind blows.	<i>Thinking, jaunty.</i>
Oh, the wind blows down.	<i>Ominous, jaunty.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: There's not much to say about this piece except I love that it gets ominous, and I love how jaunty it is!

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Thinking, Jaunty,** and **Ominous.**

28. I've Been Braintead Recently (#39), 3/18/19 (Released 7/10/19)

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I never improv on piano so I was really happy to hear I did that! I really like some of my chord choices which I know wasn't super in the moment since it was improv and my hands kinda just flopped wherever. But I'm still very happy with how this turned out. Kinda somber of a song.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I've been brain dead recently. I can't go outside.	<i>Depressed.</i>
I've been brain dead recently. I can't go outside.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I can't go outside. I can't go outside.	<i>Repetition, Upset.</i>
My mom says that I'm cool.	<i>Defending.</i>
That I only have to write one song that'll make me famous. Then I'm set.	<i>Hope, Determination.</i>
But what she doesn't know-	<i>Secret, Hiding.</i>
What she doesn't know is that I've been trying for ten years now.	<i>Secret, Hiding, Truth.</i>

When will I write a song that captures the hearts and minds of those that will listen to it?	<i>Hope, Questioning, Manipulation?</i>
When will I write a song that captures the hearts and minds of those that listen to it?	<i>Hope, Questioning, Manipulation?</i>
I've been brain dead recently. I can't go outside.	<i>Depressed.</i>
I've been brain dead recently. I can't go outside.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I can't go outside. I can't go outside.	<i>Repetition, Upset.</i>
My mom says that I'm pretty cool. I can't go outside.	<i>Defending, Repetition.</i>
My mom says all that I have to do- I can't go outside.	<i>Broken, Repetition.</i>
Is write a song that will capture the hearts and minds of those who listen to it.	<i>Hope, Questioning, Manipulation?</i>
All I have to do is write a song that captures the hearts and minds of those who view it	<i>Hope, Questioning, Manipulation?</i>
But I can't go outside.	<i>Fear</i>
I'm a little brain dead. I can't go outside.	<i>Repetition, Sadness.</i>
I'm a little brain dead. I can't go outside.	<i>Repetition, Depressed.</i>
I'm a little brain dead. I can't go outside.	<i>Depressed.</i>
I'm a little brain dead. I can't go outside.	<i>Distressed.</i>
I can't go outside.	<i>Fear, Repetition.</i>
I can't go outside.	<i>Worry, Repetition.</i>
I can't go outside.	<i>Upset, Repetition.</i>
I can't go outside.	<i>Determined, Repetition.</i>
I can't go outside. Outside.	<i>Fear, Repetition.</i>
Outside. Outside.	<i>Fear, Repetition.</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Fear coming up as a main word was very interesting. I didn't really think of it that way until I started analyzing the message behind the lyrics. Love this piece.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Depressed, Fear, Hope, and Repetition.**

Spring 2019 Song Themes: Honesty, Disgusted, Ruminating, Scene Setting, Explaining, Exploring, Disappointment, Lost, Aggression, Belief, Answer, Descriptive, Thinking, Jaunty, Ominous, Depressed, Fear, Hope, and Repetition.

Spring 2019 Overall Main Themes: Honesty, Descriptive, Somber, and Jaunty

I chose these words because Honesty works with belief, answer, hope, and exploring;

Descriptive works with ruminating, scene setting, explaining, and thinking; Somber works with the overall feel of all the of these words even though the word itself didn't exist in the themes list; and Jaunty from the overall feel of the songs: Somber lyricism with happy melodies.

~Travis Love Benson

29. When Will I Be? (#40), 8/6/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I love this. Simply love this! The going into falsetto, the melody of the "These are the things that I am" and coming back in "When will I be?" at the end, the melancholy feelings, the ideas and imagery! I feel loved right now in all ways in my life, so this song hits home to a time when I didn't feel as supported or loved romantically and physically as I do now.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

I am gentle. A gentle fly floating through space, waiting to die.	<i>Descriptive, Morbid, Imagery, Metaphor</i>
I am gentle. A gentle bee buzzing around.	<i>Metaphor, Imagery</i>

Don't wait for me.	<i>Stay away</i>
I am space.	<i>Vast, Empty, Cold</i>
I can't be seen.	<i>Invisible</i>
You have to believe.	<i>Trust</i>
You have to believe in me.	<i>Trust</i>
I am life. I can't be won.	<i>Difficult, Stubborn, Losing</i>
I can't be forgotten until I'm done.	<i>Remember, Hoping</i>
These are the things that I am.	<i>All encompassing, Direct, Explaining</i>
Gentle, and kind, oh I am.	<i>Believe me, trust</i>
I deserve to be loved like you.	<i>Wanting, Wishing</i>
Oh, when will I be?	<i>Wondering</i>
I am the ocean, I come in waves.	<i>Imagery, Water, Floating, Ebbing</i>
I come on in but I don't stay. Stay.	<i>Leaving, Wishy-washy</i>
I am the wind. I blow on by.	<i>Invisible, Cool, Drafty</i>
But I can't stay.	<i>Leaving</i>
I'll start to cry.	<i>Sad, Emotional</i>
And I deserve to be loved.	<i>Needy, Wishing, Wanting</i>
I deserve to be loved.	<i>Determined, Excited</i>
I deserve to be loved.	<i>Determined</i>
When will I be?	<i>Ready, Waiting, Wondering</i>
I am gentle. A gentle fly flying around, waiting to die.	<i>Calm, Imagery, Thoughtful</i>
I am a bee. A buzzin' around. Collecting pollen for my hive.	<i>Calm, Imagery, Thoughtful</i>
And I deserve to be loved.	<i>Straightforward</i>
I deserve to be loved.	<i>Honest</i>

I deserve to be loved. Loved. Loved.	<i>Repetitive, Upset</i>
When will I be?	<i>Wondering</i>
When will I be?	<i>Wondering</i>
When will I be?	<i>Wondering, Wishing</i>
When will I be?	<i>Waiting</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I liked the words I came up with for themes this time. I really love this song.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Imagery, Wondering, and Trust.**

30. Ain't That Just the Way? (#41), 7/27/19 (Released 8/6/19)

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I really like this melody! I'm surprised I never took this and did more with it. I find that a lot with these songs. I love them and never come back to them. Strange. Wonder how many of my favorite musicians have songs like that.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

When you're down, don't despair.	<i>Hope</i>
It's not that no one cares.	<i>Trust</i>
It's that everyone else is going through something.	<i>Honesty</i>
When you're sad, tell someone.	<i>Be proud, Be loud, Be honest</i>
Oh won't it be so fun?	<i>Tongue-in-cheek, Excited, Weight off chest</i>
When they say that "I am also sad."	<i>Feels good, Solidarity, Empathy</i>
Oh everybody's sad every day.	<i>Opinionated, Hoping</i>
Even if they're happy, know they'll say:	<i>Emotional</i>
"Oh I've been sad before and I understand.	<i>Empathy</i>

I'll be there again my friend."	
When you're blue, tell someone. .. No.	<i>Wrong</i>
When you're blue, don't be scared.	<i>Believe</i>
I'm often standing there.	<i>Strength</i>
Wondering about my own depression too.	<i>Empathy</i>
When you're down, and out.	<i>Sad, Empty</i>
And you feel like shouting.	<i>Angry, Upset</i>
You can always give me a shout.	<i>Call, Support, Friendship</i>
And I'll say "I felt that too."	<i>Empathy</i>
Oh everybody's sad every day.	<i>Hoping, Wondering, Projecting</i>
Even if they're pretending not to when they say:	<i>Deceitful</i>
"Oh I've been there before and I promise you I'll be sad again someday. Don't you worry about it."	<i>Empathy</i>
"You'll be happy again someday. Don't you worry about it. I've been sad before and I promise you that things will be okay."	<i>Empathy, Happiness, Emotion</i>
"And then you'll be sad again. Ain't that just the way?"	<i>Wondering, Funny, Empathy</i>
"Ain't that just the way?"	<i>Empathy</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: The word empathy kept coming up in my brain for a lot of these phrases, and I'm vibing with that. I agree with the words that pop into my head for each phrase most of the time, which is usually what I write.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Empathy, Hope, and Emotion.**

31. Pinball, I guess (#44), 8/18/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: “I’ve been trying to write a song about needing to monetize everything so let’s monetize it.”- Patreon. It’s such a short song that ends abruptly but I really like the melody to the first couple verses. Eventually it just goes off the rails and whatever, but I really liked it until then!

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Well it’s been said I play a mean pinball but I don’t know about that when you check the scores.	<i>Insecure</i>
It’s been said that I do music well but I don’t know about that when you check the well of	<i>Insecure</i>
Pool of people playing tunes for you every day.	<i>Vast, Oversaturated</i>
My name is one among them, will you remember it again?	<i>Lost, Clawing</i>
Or will you just remember that I am gay? Oh, that’s not my cliché.	<i>Upset</i>
It’s just part of who I am.	<i>Honest</i>
I don’t understand why people will use that.	<i>Wondering</i>
I am so much more than who I tell you that I am.	<i>Secretive, Honest, Loud, In Excess, Myriad</i>
But I’m as honest as I can be my friend.	<i>Truthful, Trying</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Interesting themes came up with this song. I would like to use the quick lyricism to my advantage in the song for this season, because quick lyricism happens a lot in these songs this season.

I’m thinking the *main themes* based on what I’ve heard/written are **Insecure**, **Honest**, and **Wondering**.

32. At 27 (#45), 8/19/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: “I got really upset while writing this and gave up and sighed haha I’ll get back to it” - Patreon. What’s fascinating is that I remember writing this and thinking that it was absolutely awful; But I’m listening to it now and it’s the perfect song and length and theme for turning 27 and being 27 and existing as someone who never thought they’d make it to 27.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

“Fuck”	<i>Stressed</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t feel like I am lost and can’t be found.	<i>Despondent</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t feel like everything makes me wanna drown.	<i>Overwhelmed</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t be someone other than who I want to be	<i>Stressed, Unsure</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t know everything there is to know	<i>Lost, Unfulfilled</i>
And I run. I run away.	<i>Fearing, Escapism</i>
And I run. I run away.	<i>Escapism</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t run. I shouldn’t tell myself I can’t have fun.	<i>Honesty, Self-Love</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t sing. I shouldn’t be pretending.	<i>Lying, Unsure</i>
At 27 I shouldn’t be what everyone wants me to be.	<i>Honesty, Self-Love</i>
At 27 I should have it figured out but then I’m left with all of these doubts.	<i>Too much pressure, Overwhelmed</i>
And I run. I run. I run. I run away.	<i>Escapism</i>
I run. I run away.	<i>Escapism</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: Yeah I really love this song and these themes and I think I know how I'll structure my Summer song in the cycle.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Escapism, Self-Love, and Overwhelmed.**

33. Be Okay (#46), 8/20/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I wrote this while on tour, and it was a great tour but I was feeling distraught after coming out of tour and needing to return to my stressful life, and I wrote this. I like the chord progression.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

If everybody is alive, and this isn't a simulation.	<i>Wondering, Dissociating</i>
Then why are we doing other things that we're doing?	<i>Frustrated</i>
Why are we pretending the way that we're pretending?	<i>Confusion, Frustrated</i>
Everything isn't okay.	<i>Honest, Pessimistic</i>
Everything won't be okay.	<i>Lost, Upset</i>
Unless we work at it and make it right.	<i>Hopeful</i>
The amazon jungle is burning.	<i>Disgusted, Fire, Angry</i>
The amazon jungle is still burning	<i>Loss, Destruction</i>
The amazon jungle is burning. If I say it three times maybe you'll hear it.	<i>Fire, Burning, Ash</i>
Spoken: "The amazon jungle is burning."	<i>Upset</i>
Things aren't okay. And we made them this way.	<i>Pointed, Disgusted</i>
But we can only take so much blame. So much blame.	<i>Honest, Saddened</i>

And everybody's pointing fingers, why don't we turn them into hands?	<i>Uplifting, Hopeful</i>
And then we can help one another and we can build it up again.	<i>Hopeful, Ready, Hardworking</i>
Everything will be okay if we let it be okay.	<i>Hopeful, Excited</i>
Everything will be okay if we let it be okay.	<i>Hopeful, Ready</i>
Everything will be okay if we let it be okay.	<i>Hopeful, Honest</i>
Everything will be okay if we let it be okay.	<i>Hopeful, Believing</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: The line about pointed fingers turning into hands that work together to rebuild is such good improv imagery and I said "WOW" out loud when I heard it. Very impressed.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Hopeful, Honest, and Frustrated.**

34. Lonely (#47), 8/21/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: "Trying to write about my feelings from a different perspective. I'm lonely" - Patreon. I use harmonica in this!

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Spoken: "Alright."	<i>Ready</i>
A man walks down the street. A man walks down the street. He has two legs and he uses them to walk down the street and he says:	<i>Quick lyricism, Descriptive, World building</i>
"I know my life is going the way that it should be going."	<i>Belief, Honesty</i>
The man knows that his life is going the way that he tells everyone that it should be going.	<i>Quick Lyricism, Statement</i>
But does he believe it for himself?	<i>Doubting</i>

Does he believe it for himself?	<i>Doubting</i>
A man walks down the street. A man walks down the street. He looks at the other people walking down the street.	<i>Quick lyricism</i>
It seems like nobody knows where they're going.	<i>Lost</i>
"If everybody's lost," he says.	<i>Wondering, Aloud</i>
"If everybody's lost" he says, "Then what's the point of even getting going?"	<i>Quick lyricism, Repetition, Pessimistic</i>
"If nobody knows where they're going?"	<i>Together</i>
"If everybody is lost then everybody is found."	<i>Hopeful</i>
"If nobody's lost then nobody is found."	<i>Sad</i>
He says "I am lost. I can't be found."	<i>Despondent</i>
"I am lost. I can't be found."	<i>Despondent, Repetitive</i>
"If I am found. I can't be lost."	<i>Pessimistic</i>
"If I am found. I found myself wandering here."	<i>Lost, Discovery</i>
"If everybody's lonely, what's the point of being lonely?"	<i>Unsure, Upset, Wondering</i>
"If everybody's lonely, what's the point of being lonely?"	<i>Expectant, Hurried</i>
"If everybody's lonely, what's the point of being lonely?"	<i>Lost, Distracted, Lonely</i>
"Lonely"	<i>Lonely</i>
"And If everybody's lonely, what's the point of being?"	<i>Lonely</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: I think I was really into “You Can Call Me Al” by Paul Simon at this time in my life because I can hear the references in this haha. I love this a lot. I never break out my harmonica so I was glad to hear it!

I’m thinking the *main themes* based on what I’ve heard/written are **Lonely, Lost,** and **Repetitive.**

35. Passissific Coast Highway (Bonus), 9/4/19

Thoughts/feelings after initial listening: I wanted to include this because it was an improv turned song of me singing about my trip to the west coast, and that’s an important part of my summer 2019. This was when it was still partially improv and partially written.

Lyrics

Feelings/Themes

Spoken: “I’m getting it. I’m getting it.”	<i>Excited</i>
I drive up the Pacific Coast Highway. I leave LA at 8 AM.	<i>Scene setting, descriptive</i>
It is warm out, but not too warm.	<i>Moderate</i>
And the sun is beginning to ascend.	<i>Morning, Waking up</i>
Oh I drive up through Malibu.	<i>Scene setting, descriptive</i>
I’ve had this memory since I was a kid.	<i>Dream, Reminisce</i>
I see the ocean on my left for once, and I am reminded that it is:	<i>Scene setting, descriptive</i>
The pacific ocean.	<i>Vast, blue, large</i>
Oh I drive up to Estero Bluffs and I sit there for a minute.	<i>Scene setting, descriptive, pondering</i>
I write a song about my life and all of the people in.	<i>Decisive, thoughtful, kind</i>
Oh I drive up through San Luis Obispo, and I stop to piss at a 7/11-Nabisco.	<i>Scene setting, descriptive, personal</i>
Except the fact that the bathroom is closed so	<i>Scene setting, descriptive</i>

I have to walk through a park to get to one that is a little bit gross.	
I'm driving up the Pacific Coast Highway.	<i>Repetitive, explaining</i>
I'm driving up the Pacific Coast Highway.	<i>Repetitive</i>
And I'm feeling like Sisyphus and his boulder	<i>Never getting anywhere, stuck, moving</i>
And I'm driving up the Pacific Coast Highway.	<i>Repetitive, descriptive</i>
I drive up the pacific coast highway.	<i>Long trip</i>
I stop at the whale watcher's cafe.	<i>Break, ocean, view</i>
The gas is \$7.50/gallon and the bread bowl was \$18 but I eat it anyway.	<i>Expensive</i>
I drive up the pacific coast highway, there's 80 miles right against the coast.	<i>Beautiful, view</i>
Going around the mountain, nobody knows if there will be an accident.	<i>Dangerous</i>
No one will stop you. No one will stop you.	<i>Dangerous</i>
And I spend 3 days in San Francisco.	<i>Scene setting</i>
I never see the golden gate bridge.	<i>Missing out</i>
I tried my best, but I never got there.	<i>Busy</i>
I got too high one day and I fell asleep on the bridge	<i>Lazy, bad</i>
And I went to San Francisco and I saw penguins in the zoo.	<i>Cute, imagery, memory</i>
I held one for a minute, I have a picture!	<i>memory</i>
It's really, really, really, really, really cute.	<i>memory</i>
Oh, pacific coast highway.	<i>Repetitive, explaining</i>
Oh I drove up the pacific coast highway	<i>Vast, long</i>
And I fell asleep on the pacific coast highway	<i>Tired</i>

And I feel like Sisyphus and his boulder.	<i>Never getting anywhere, stuck, moving</i>
I went to the Santa Monica pier and I saw everything.	<i>Descriptive, scene setting</i>
I was cold. The sun had set. There was pinball. There was people upset.	<i>Scene setting, cold air, beach</i>
I went to Monica and I got cold and I fell asleep in my car for a minute before I drove the:	<i>Long drive</i>
Pacific coast highway.	<i>Vast</i>
This is a song about the pacific coast highway.	<i>Long, stretched, descriptive</i>
And I feel like Sisyphus and his boulder.	<i>Never getting anywhere, stuck, moving</i>
And I drove up the pacific coast highway.	<i>Repetitive, descriptive</i>
I... I... I.	<i>Stuck, myself</i>

Thoughts/feelings after feelings/themes: In retrospect afterwards I'm interested to see how this affects the overall themes for the season.

I'm thinking the *main themes* based on what I've heard/written are **Scene setting, Descriptive, and Repetitive.**

Summer 2019 Song Themes: Imagery, Wondering, Trust, Empathy, Hope, Emotion, Insecure, Honest, Wondering, Escapism, Self-Love, Overwhelmed, Hopeful, Honest, Frustrated, Lonely, Lost, Repetitive, Scene setting, Descriptive, and Repetitive.

Summer 2019 Overall Main Themes: Emotional, Honest, Descriptive, and Repetitive.

These four words capture all of the above words for the season's themes. Now to put them into a song.

~Travis Love Benson

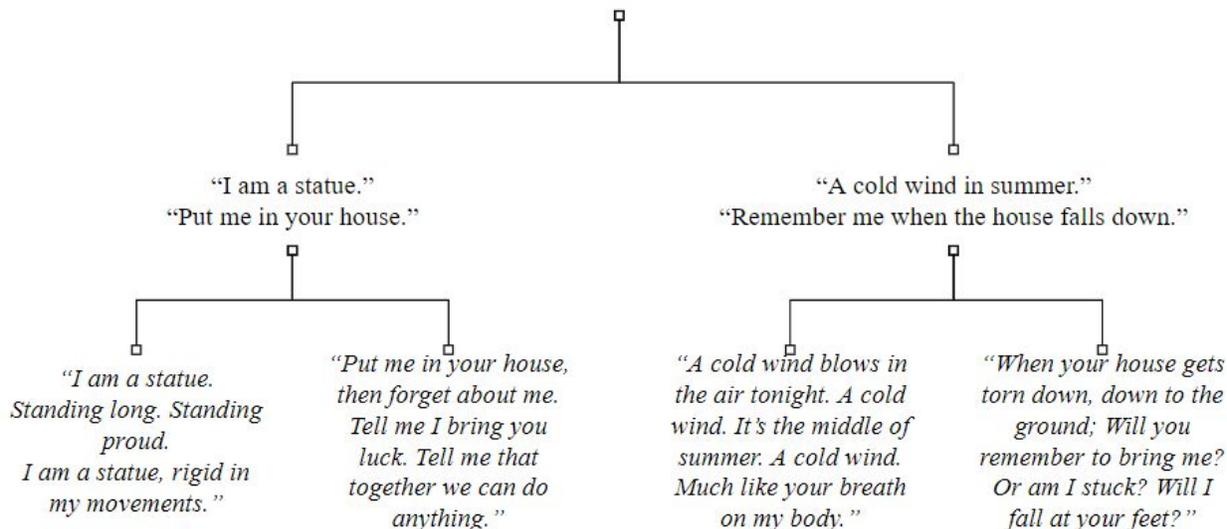
Appendix B

Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics

Guitar improv in G

Summer 2018

**Bitterness, Loss,
Wonder**

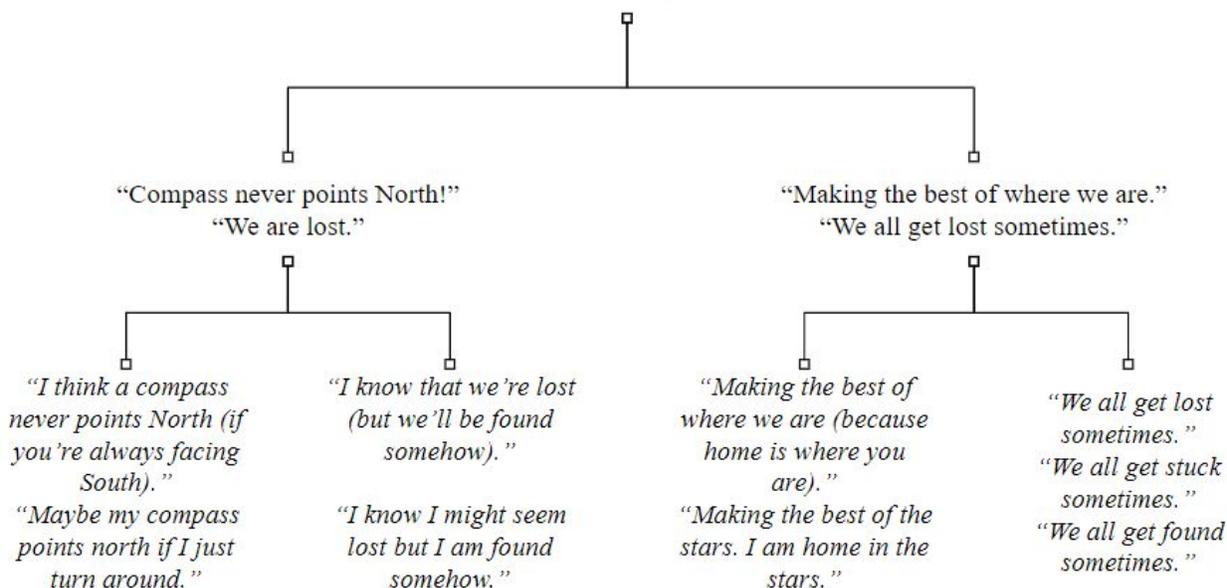


Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics

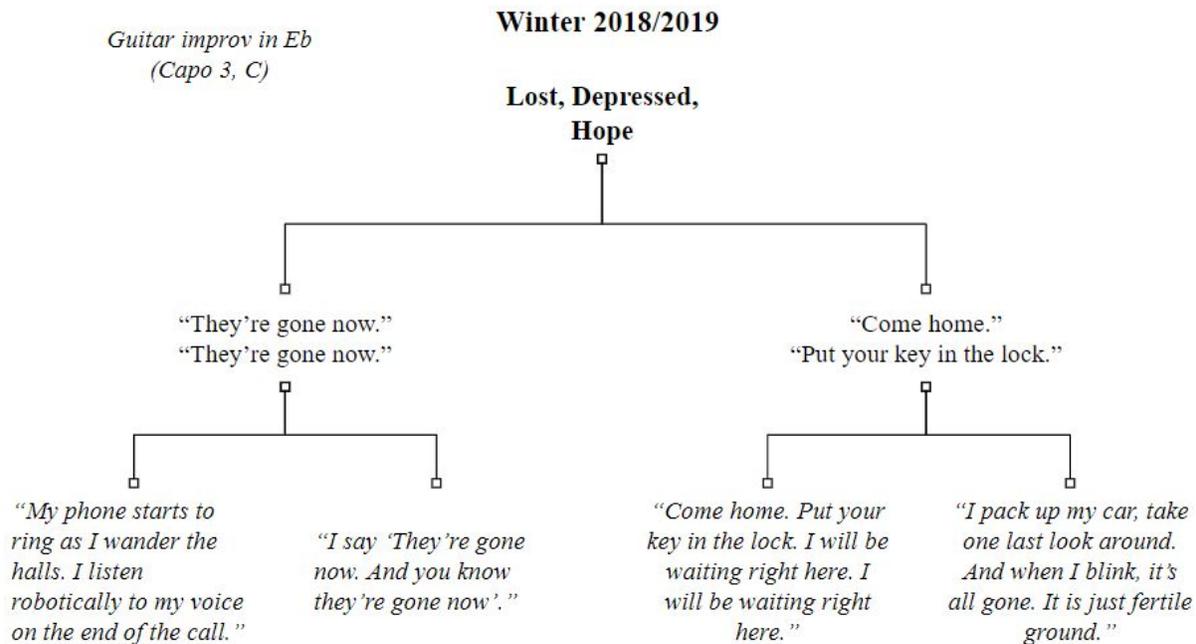
*Guitar improv in E
(Capo 2, D)*

Autumn 2018

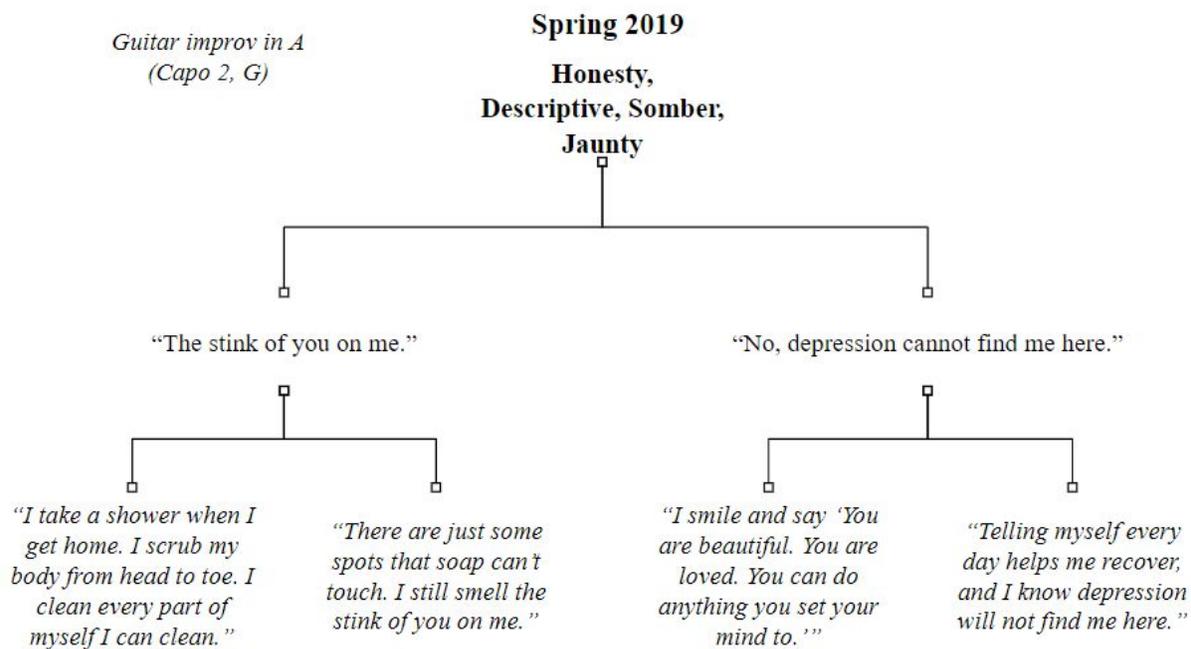
**Melancholic,
Honest, Hopeful**



Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics



Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics



Breakdown of thoughts into lyrics

Guitar improv in G

Summer 2019

**Emotional, Honest,
Deceptive,
Repetitive**

