

The Use of Songwriting with College Students for Self-Expression and Self-Reflection

by

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Abstract

This study is a phenomenological approach to explore college students' experiences in songwriting. Four college students participated in a songwriting experience, and completed interviews at two points in the process to learn the essence of their experience in this research. The first interview occurred immediately after the songwriting experience and the second interview was arranged within three days after the first. Data was manually coded. Six major themes were found including *enjoyable*, *frustration*, *sense of achievement*, *insight*, *stress*, and *relief*. Three themes of the songwriting products were *sleep deprivation*, *financial hardship*, and *intimate relationships*. Relatable results and questions emerged are discussed.

Keywords: college students, songwriting

The Use of Songwriting with College Students for Self-Expression and Self-Reflection

This study investigated four college students' experiences in guided songwriting and explored how they used songwriting as a means of self-expression and self-reflection. My interest in this topic was influenced by my own experiences as a college student. I often experienced a lack of support when I felt stressed. Also, I heard complaints from peers about the lack of mental health services on campus. Many friends felt that the conventional mental health services that are established on campus are not useful for every student. Nowadays, university administrations do try to pay more attention to students' mental health, such as providing multiple opportunities for them to reduce pressure at the end of semester. However, I think it's valuable to hear college students' voices from their perspectives. Exploring alternative ways to promote college students' mental health is meaningful and may be helpful to provide options for students to have a more healthy college experience.

Literature Review

The college student population in the United States is significant and is increasing. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017), there was a total number of 20,224,069 students enrolled in college in the United States in 2016, with 43.4% being male and 56.6% being female students. The number of enrolled undergraduate students was 17,252,046 and graduate students comprised 2,972,023. The percentage of students in regards to race in the United States were: American Indian or Alaska Native, 0.7%; Asian, 6%; Black or African American, 12.4%; Hispanic or Latino, 16.6%; Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 0.3%; White, 51%; two or more races, 3.2%.

Mental Health of College Students

College-age students face a multitude of mental health challenges in response to their changing life situation, as well as the pressures of academic life. Several studies have indicated that students experience a variety of negative emotional responses. The National College Health Assessment, sponsored by the American College Health Association (ACHA-NCHA; 2018), found that students reported experiencing feelings of hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, depression, and anger. These feelings were rated as high in intensity, and 4.7% of them reported self-injurious behaviors in the last 12 months. This is similar to the findings of Eisenberg, Hunt, and Speer (2013). In their survey, students indicated having been diagnosed with disorders such as depression (17.3%), panic disorder (4.1%), and generalized anxiety (7.0%), as well as reported having experienced suicidal ideation (6.3%) and self-injurious behaviors (6.3%). Students' mental health problems were largely associated with gender, race/ethnicity, religiosity, relationship status, living on campus, and financial situation. The top five stressors identified by college students are (a) academics, (b) finances, (c) sleep difficulties, (d) intimate relationships, and (e) family problems (ACHA-NCHA, 2018).

There are certain characteristics of students that may cause them to be more vulnerable to mental health issues. Eisenberg, Hunt, and Speer (2013) found characteristics such as gender, cultural heritage, and degree program impact students. Women had a higher prevalence of major depression, panic disorder, and generalized anxiety than did men. Compared to white students, Asian students rated higher in depression but lower in anxiety, and Hispanic students were also higher in depression. Graduate students had significantly lower depression than undergraduate students. Students with lower quality social support were more likely to suffer from mental health problems (Hefner & Eisenberg, 2009).

Students identifying themselves as racial minorities experience higher risks related to mental health problems. Also, the number of enrolled college students who identified as minorities has been increasing (Iarovici, 2014). Students of minority race/ethnicity backgrounds, international status, and low socioeconomic status are at higher of social isolation. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) found that Asian students reported significantly lower quality of social support and many international students reported financial struggles. They also found that higher *quality* of social support received was strongly connected with a lower possibility of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and eating disorders, regardless of the *frequency* of social contacts. Similarly, Nash et al. (2017) found a high percentage of non-white student groups reported a need for, but did not use, mental health services. More specifically, Hispanic students were 1.42 times more likely to show “needed but did not use” mental health services than all other ethnicities. Asian students were more likely to answer “did not need” mental health services. They were commonly more resistant to seeking mental health services than their Western peers. African American students were more likely to use non-professional social or religious networks rather than counseling services. Students from various ethnic groups were likely to have diverse reasons for not seeking services.

Students’ sexual orientation is also associated with mental health conditions. Oswalt and Wyatt (2011) found that sexual minority college students, including gay, lesbian, bisexual, and unsure students consistently reported higher levels of mental health problems.

It was also found that certain characteristics provided buffering effects on mental health. Several studies concluded that students in romantic relationships reported higher well-being as compared to their single peers (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010; Eisenberg, Hunt, & Speer, 2013). Researchers found that increasing the sense of belonging, connection, and support benefit college students’ mental health. Karaman and Tarim (2018)

explored the correlations between the sense of belonging and well-being. They found that meeting the need of belonging to the university community was effective in improving well-being among college students. Hefner and Eisenberg (2009) found that perceiving a high quality of social support was strongly connected with a lower likelihood of depression, anxiety, suicidality, and eating disorders (p. 496). Eisenberg et al. (2011) concluded that the most common supportive resources were friends (70.5%) and family members (52.5%).

Barriers to Help-seeking

College students' mental health needs have been found to be insufficiently addressed. Zivin, Eisenberg, Gollust, and Golberstein (2009) found that more than half of college students suffered from at least one mental health problem. Fewer than half of the students with a mental health problem received treatment. Eisenberg, Hunt, Speer, and Zivin (2011) supported this conclusion, finding that most students with mental health problems did not receive treatment that they need.

Public and self-stigmas have been recognized as barriers to help-seeking for mental health. Public stigma is associated with negative stereotypes and prejudice held by individuals in a society collectively. Self-stigma is when the individual identifies himself as part of the stigmatized group and applies corresponding stereotypes and prejudices to oneself (Corrigan, 2004). Both stigmas prevent people from using mental health services. Eisenberg, Downs, Golberstein, and Zivin (2009) found that stigma about mental health influences college students' help-seeking behaviors and varied according to factors such as gender and race in the United States. Generally, women had marginally lower perceived stigma and lower personal stigma compared with men. However, Hispanic males perceived higher personal stigma than Hispanic females. Relative to white students, all other racial group students had a higher perceived stigma. Black students had a high perceived stigma, while

Asian students had the highest personal stigma. Other characteristics that connected with stigma are younger age, being an international student, having a higher level of religiosity, being heterosexual, or being from a poor family. Also, personal stigma was significantly associated with a few measures of lower help-seeking. Additionally, Nash, Sixbey, An, and Puig (2017) found that academic status, socioeconomic status, physical and psychological conditions, stereotypical views, and barriers to service influence college students' help-seeking behaviors.

Male students were less likely to utilize mental health services compared with their female peers (Eisenberg et al., 2011; Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008). The most common reasons students do not access services were not having enough time and a lack of knowledge of the services. Students felt they had been given inadequate information on how to access mental health services. The top three sources of information regarding university mental health services were friends or fellow students, advertisements, and the internet (Yorgason, Linville, & Zitzman, 2008). For students receiving services, Eisenberg et al. (2011) found 13.7% of students received psychotropic medication, 14.8% of students received psychotherapy in the past 12 months, with 21.8% received at least one of these treatments. Thus, finding alternative ways to help college students explore their inner self and to educate college students about campus mental health services are significant.

College Student's Self-expression and Mental Health

Experiencing barriers to seeking help adds yet another layer of stress. It is important that struggling students have opportunities to express their experiences. Lee and Durksen (2018) found that self-expression is one of the elements that influence academic interest, which is also associated with young people's life satisfaction. Similarly, Arslan and Adıgüzel (2018) conducted a study which found negative emotions significantly correlated between

aggression and empathic tendency, expression of emotions, and self-compassion. They concluded that these are the significant predictors of aggression. They also suggested universities should develop additional activities for college students' skills in expressing emotion.

Ramos and Linstrum (2017) found that after journaling, songwriting is one of young people's most frequently used written form of self-expression. In regard to emotions associated with written forms of self-expression, the most frequent emotion associated with writing was happiness, following by negative emotions, such as depression, sadness and loneliness.

Other creative forms that have been used successfully with college students and adults' self-expression and health promotion included collage and drawing (Boldt & Paul, 2011; Raffaelli & Hartzell, 2016), dance (Chouhan & Kumar, 2011; Fournillier, 2012; Wiedenhofer, Hofinger, Wagner, & Koch, 2017), massage therapy (Leivadi et al., 1999), progressive relaxation therapy (Chouhan & Kumar, 2011), music therapy (Fiore, 2018; Lee, Jeong, Yim, & Jeon, 2016; Yucesan & Sendurur, 2018), poetry therapy (Yucesan & Sendurur, 2018), and drama therapy (Keats & Sabharwal, 2008; Yucesan & Sendurur, 2018).

Music Therapy

Music therapy has been implemented with college students' health promotion for multiple purposes, such as coping with stress and anxiety (Fiore, 2018; Lee, Jeong, Yim, & Jeon, 2016), developing self-esteem (Draves, 2008; Yucesan & Sendurur, 2018), education training (Baker & Krout, 2011, 2012), and exploring students' development (Riley, 2012). The American Music Therapy Association (AMTA) defines music therapy as, "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” (2018, para.1). Four main methods of music therapy are improvisational, recreative, compositional, and receptive methods (Bruscia, 2014). Within each of these methods are a variety of music therapy techniques. Variations of the compositional method include song transformation (to change the words, phrases, or the entire lyrics while maintaining the melody of the song or vice versa), songwriting, instrumental composition, notational activities, and music collage.

Songwriting in music therapy. Songwriting is one of the main methods of music therapy. Songs can be powerful form of self-expression. Bruscia (1998) stated, “Songs are ways that human beings explore emotions. They express who we are and how we feel” (p. 9). Bruscia (2014) describes the use of songwriting in music therapy as “the client composes an original song or any part thereof (e.g., lyrics, melody, accompaniment) with varying levels of technical assistance from the therapist. The process usually includes some form of notation or recording of the final product” (p. 134). Wigram and Baker (2005) define clinical songwriting as “the process of creating, notating and/or recording lyrics and music by the client or clients and therapist within a therapeutic relationship to address psychosocial, emotional, cognitive, and communication needs of the client” (p. 16).

Therapeutic songwriting has been implemented worldwide and primarily in English-speaking countries, such as the United States, Canada, United Kingdom, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand (Baker et al., 2008). Most of the noted songwriting experiences were completed in a single session and the lyrics were commonly written before the music. The most frequently used techniques were brainstorming and fill-in-the-blank. The settings of songwriting include individual, small group, large group, and family group settings, but the individual setting is the most common context (Baker et al., 2009).

Benefits of songwriting. There are many benefits of the therapeutic songwriting process. Baker et al. (2008) noted that the most common goals in songwriting were: 1) experiencing mastery, developing self-confidence, enhancing self-esteem; 2) choice and decision making; 3) develop a sense of self; 4) externalizing thoughts, fantasies, and emotions; 5) telling the client's story; and 6) gaining insight or clarifying thoughts and feelings.

Songwriting has been used in a wide range of populations, including children, adolescents, adults, and older adults (Baker, 2015). Songwriting has played an important role in clinical populations such as:

- palliative care (O'Callaghan, 1990),
- early neurorehabilitation (Baker et al., 2018),
- bereavement (Dalton & Krout, 2006; Fiore, 2016; Heath & Lings, 2012), and
- student training (Baker & Krout, 2011, 2012; Draves, 2008; Riley, 2012).

The common benefits of songwriting include:

- expressing feelings (Baker & Krout, 2012; Dalton & Krout, 2006; Fiore, 2016; Heath & Lings, 2012; O'Callaghan, 1990; Riley, 2012),
- gaining support (Baker et al., 2018; O'Callaghan, 1990),
- facilitating self-reflection (Baker & Krout, 2011; Baker et al., 2018; Dalton & Krout, 2006; Heath & Lings, 2012; Riley, 2012),
- satisfaction (Baker & MacDonald, 2013; Draves, 2008),
- and growth (Baker & Krout, 2012; Baker et al., 2018).

Baker and MacDonald (2013) concluded that non-musicians can easily enter flow experiences through songwriting, and as such, no prior musical training is necessary for

success. Original songwriting was found to be more meaningful to people than lyric re-creating and song parody.

Based on this information, it can be concluded that therapeutic songwriting experiences can be designed to address the mental health needs of college students. Considering the importance of music in this age group, songwriting would be a meaningful experience for college students. Baker and McDonald (2013) noted songwriting is natural activity for college students to create meaningful experience. With guidance, therapeutic songwriting could be aimed at ameliorating the struggles that college students may be experiencing.

Research Questions

College students face a multitude of mental health challenges. Some of them do not receive mental health services because of stigma or other reasons. Therapeutic songwriting can provide an alternative way for college students to engage in self-expression and self-reflection. Thus the purpose of this study is to gain an understanding on college students' experience in songwriting. The research question and subquestions are as follows:

Research question: What is college students' experience in songwriting?

Sub questions:

- Does songwriting provide a means for college students' self-expression and self-reflection? If so, how?
- Does songwriting affects students' sense of well-being, specifically with respect to stress?
- What are the preferred themes that college students express in the songwriting?

Method

Methodology

The methodology of this research is qualitative, with an emphasis on interpretation. Specifically, this research is a phenomenological study with descriptive goals, seeking to gain an understanding of college students' songwriting experiences. Phenomenology was selected as the research design because it is the study of people's lived experience (Creswell, 2014). The focus of this research is on college students' perceptions on the "lived" songwriting experience. My philosophical worldview is constructivist. According to Forinash and Grocke (2005), constructivism is based on the tenet that "reality is constructed by those experiencing it" (p. 325). In this research, the participant's experience and his voice are primarily important. Data was gathered through interviews and with arts-informed data. The purpose was to gain an understanding about college students' experiences in order to make it visible and to discern this population's priority of self-expression and mental health needs.

Two face-to-face interviews were conducted to collect data because only the participant himself can provide detailed information about his expression and mental health needs. Interviews happened in two sessions because each interview had a different focus. The focus of the first interview was on the songwriting experience, while the focus of the second one was an in-depth conversation on the reflection of listening to the recorded song. The second interview was arranged within three days after the first session to keep relevancy. I conducted semi-structured, open-ended interviews, which were audiotaped and transcribed. The transcription was coded.

Therapeutic Songwriting in the Research Protocol

In light of the aforementioned definition of therapeutic songwriting from Baker and Wigram (2005), technically, the songwriting process in this research was not considered

therapeutic songwriting because the participants and I were not engaged in a true therapeutic relationship. However, a relationship was formed during the process, and I served as a “quasi-therapist” in guiding each participant to engage in self-expression and self-reflection. Based on this relationship and the purpose of the research, I followed the protocol of the 10-step therapeutic songwriting process (Appendix A), which was applied in a series of previous songwriting researches (Baker & Krout, 2011, 2012; Krout, 2005) successfully.

In the songwriting, symbols and metaphors were incorporated into the lyrics. The final music product was a reflection of the participant’s externalized feelings, thoughts, problems, and resources (Bruscia, 2014). Bruscia (2014) stated that self-awareness and insight can be reached via self-reflection, so I provided opportunities to participants for self-reflection. This self-reflection on the songwriting was a process to make the participant’s internal world audible. This was also an essential process to bring unconsciousness into consciousness.

Experience-oriented songwriting. Songwriting in this research was experience-oriented (Baker, 2015; Bruscia, 2014) with the purpose of engaging participants in music experience. The participant’s perceptions and lived experience in songwriting process were important. Before and during the songwriting, I emphasized and repeated the focus is the experience rather than the song artifact: “We are not writing a song for performance, so don’t worry about music theory, how long or how short it will be. There are no rules in this songwriting, the song product can be whatever you feel comfortable.”

The researcher’s role. In this research, the participants were the songwriters. In other words, I gave them authority throughout the songwriting process and they made all musical decisions on their songs themselves. I only jumped in when they got stuck in writing melody or chords. In such situations, I provided some optional chord progressions for them to choose

rather than writing music for them. My primary role was to provide a comfortable and private space, instruments and materials for participants to write songs. Additionally, I tried my best to empathize with the participants in both songwriting and interviews. According to Bruscia (2014), empathy is to identify with and understand the participant and being with him/her in the here and now. I believe being empathetic can help me to build a trusting relationship with participants, enter their inner world, and guide the participant to engage in the experience fully.

Settings and materials. The research sessions were conducted in a private class room or practice room within the music department at State University of New York at New Paltz (SUNY New Paltz). One day before the songwriting session, I asked each participant what instruments he/she would like to bring into the room. The session room was arranged as the participant requested. I prepared blank music sheets, pencils, and erasers for participants to use, and hung a sign on the door requesting privacy. Garageband software was used to record the song on an iPad or MacBook.

Research Process

A recruitment email (Appendix B) was sent to university students at SUNY New Paltz. Participants self-selected by responding to the email. I received 28 responses stating that they were interested in participating. I then sent out a questionnaire (Appendix C) to exclude music-major students and students with mental diagnosis. Eventually, four college students were selected based on the study criteria for participants. After informed consent (Appendix D) has been obtained, songwriting sessions happened individually with the participant. Data was gathered through two sessions (see Figure 1).

Participants and recruitment. Participants included four non-music major college students with no diagnosed mental diseases. According to Baker and MacDonald (2013),

non-music major students enter flow experiences during songwriting easier. Original songwriting was found more meaningful than song parody and lyric re-creating. So the

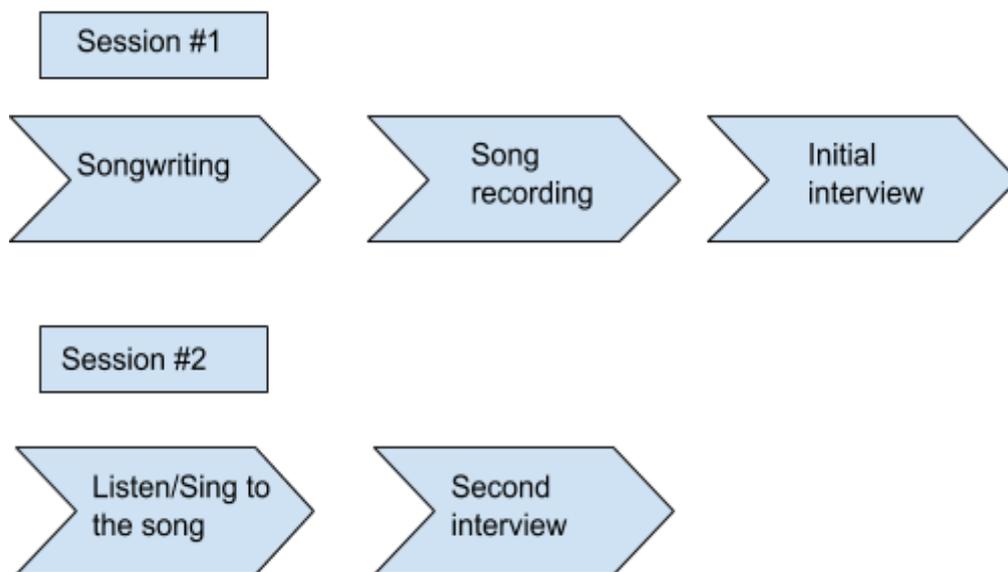


Figure 1. Research process

participant has authority to make any decisions in songwriting. Also students with diagnosed mental diseases were excluded from this study because this helps provide a level of control. The mental health problems would add more variables to the research. After the Human Research Ethics Board (HREB) at SUNY New Paltz approval of submission (Appendix E), I sent a recruitment email (Appendix B) to solicit participants at the SUNY New Paltz. Table 1 illustrates the characteristics of participants.

Participants' songwriting background.

Participant A: In high school, Participant A engaged in a class during which students wrote lyrics that were set to music by the teacher. However, Participant A did not write lyrics and music together before.

Participant B: Participant B's father and grandfather work in music industry. He is a seasoned songwriter, and wrote songs for self-expressive purposes.

Participant C: Participant C used to play in a band, and has written "a few" songs on

Table 1

Characteristics of Participants

	Gender	Age	Year	Race	Mental diagnosis	Previous songwriting experience
Participant A	Other	21	Senior	Asian/Asian-American	No	No
Participant B	Male	21	Junior	African-American/Hispanic	No	Yes
Participant C	Male	24	Senior	Hispanic/Latino	No	Yes
Participant D	Female	20	Sophomore	Hispanic/Latino	No	No

guitar and bass. He has played at a couple of shows, and recorded “a few” songs with the band in studio as bass player.

Participant D: Participant D had no songwriting experience. She shared that she knew “very little on guitar and on piano.” For instance, it was evident during the songwriting process that she did not know basic chords.

Research sessions. In the first session, the consent process was reviewed and participants signed the informed consent form. Each participant received a copy of the signed form. In addition to that, I asked each participant to fill out the short questionnaire (Appendix C) again to validate the information that they provided in the communication email previously. After that, we conducted a 10-step songwriting process that was adapted from Krout (2005, p. 211) (Appendix A). At the beginning of songwriting, I provided some optional themes for participants to brainstorm. The song was recorded immediately after it was completed. I then facilitated an initial interview.

The initial interview occurred during the first session so the participant's experience was fresh, and to reduce the number of times the participant was required to meet with me. I followed the *semi-structured* interview method in qualitative interviewing (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The semi-structured interview helped the participant to focus on the topic of each interview while allowing for flexibility. See Appendix F for the guiding questions. The focus of the first interview was the student's experience of the songwriting. The purpose was to explore the participant's experience of songwriting as a method of self-expression. In our conversation, I also listened to participant's answer to decide what follow-up question to ask. However, the participant had authority to decide the pace of the conversation or to reject answer any questions. Interviews were audio-recorded. The first session took around two hours in total.

The second session was scheduled within three days after the first session to keep the experience fresh and relevant. In this session, the participant and I listened to the recording of the song three times and sang with the song twice. Then, I conducted the second interview afterwards. Again, the interview was semi-structured with guiding questions (Appendix F). The focus of the second interview was to facilitate verbal reflection about the song he/she wrote. The second session took around 30 minutes.

Data Generation

Two face-to-face interviews were conducted with each participant following the aforementioned research sessions. Interviews were recorded using QuickTime Player and saved on my MacBook with password protection.

The data was transcribed by me after each session and saved on my MacBook. I listened to the recording multiple times and transcribed data cautiously. After transcribing data, I emailed transcripts to each participant for validity and to ask if there were any

identifying information that the participant wants to omit. All of the participants replied my email and confirmed the transcripts.

Data Analysis

The interview transcripts and lyrics transcripts were generated for analysis. I included lyrics because both lyrics and interview were in the form of words. I decided to merge the data from both interviews because the two interviews were related, and the data were related.

In regards to coding strategies, the research question of the study, “What is college students’ experience in songwriting?”, was associated with studying the nature of the experience, which was an ontological research question. Thus I decided to employ in vivo coding and emotion coding. In vivo coding (Saldaña, 2016) uses direct quotation that features the participants’ voices to keep the data participant-generated instead of researcher-generated. Emotion coding (Saldaña, 2016) labels the participant’s feelings and experience by the participant himself to explore his underlying sentiments. However, when I started implementing the coding process, I realized emotion or feeling just a very small part of information that the participant disclosed. Emotion coding was not the most ideal coding method for this research. Eventually, I changed emotion coding to descriptive coding.

Descriptive coding (Saldaña, 2016) summarizes the participant’s language into a word or short phrase in order to answer research question. Most importantly, descriptive coding is suggested for the beginning researcher to learn how to code data. After reviewing the coding methods, I made three columns in Microsoft Word manually. The left column was in vivo coding. The middle column is the transcript and the right column is descriptive coding. In the meantime, I analyzed four anchor codes (Adu, 2016) based on the research question: songwriting experience, self-expression, self-reflection, and stress. This addition allowed me to keep my coding within the context of the research questions. It was also helpful for me to

disregard other unrelated information. The data analysis process can be summarized in the following steps:

- Transcribe songwriting product and two interviews manually word for word;
- Re-listen the recording and look at all the data;
- Decide the coding strategy;
- Adjust the coding strategy;
- Decide the anchor codes;
- Sort coding into related anchor codes;
- Generate categories under each participant;
- Winnow the data and merge categories of all participants to aggregate data into a small number of themes;
- Generate a description of themes for analysis; and
- Interpret the themes

The processes include segmenting and taking apart the data and putting it back together in order to answer the research questions. So a small number of themes were aggregated.

Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness strategy used in this research was member-checking (Creswell, 2014). Participants were given the opportunity to review the transcripts for accuracy and to clarify information as needed. I showed the major findings and themes to the participant in order to validate that the findings were trustworthy, authentic, and credible. Additionally, I also checked with participants during the interview. Participant A replied “It’s different.” when I asked Participant A: “Do you like the song?” I followed to ask: “So do you feel the melody is what you want to express or it’s different than what you experienced?” Participant

A answered: “It is still a really empty, emptiness, or loneliness. And I think that’s expressed very well in the music. So yes.”

In addition, I wrote memos (Saldaña, 2015) during the songwriting and interviews process to mark down the process and significant moments. So when I doing the coding and analysis, I went back to check my memos to validate the preciseness of my coding and analysis.

Ethical Criteria

This research was deemed as exempt from human research guidelines because this research was associated with little to no risk to the participants. Thus, I employed “Application for Interview Research Exception” paperwork. The recruitment email (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix D) were included in the application. This research was approved by HREB at SUNY New Paltz and I began to recruit participants.

Results

The participants selected a theme for the songs at the first step from the following categories: Academics, finances, sleep difficulties, intimate relationships, family problems, and feelings (Appendix A). Participant A selected sleep difficulties, Participant B selected financial hardship, Participants C and D selected intimate relationships. Additionally, each participant came to the session with different musical backgrounds, so each of their songwriting started in a distinctive way. For instance, after decided the theme of the song, Participant A played G flat minor - E major - D flat minor chords on the piano and said: “I like playing around that. I kind of like that.” I encouraged Participant A to play around it and just let anything comes up. Similarly, Participant D played F major - G major - A minor chords on the piano without knowing the name of them, and said that was all she knows. She did not know how to start writing a song. I recommend her to humming with the chord

progression. Through humming and singing with it, she quickly found inspiration. Participant B came to the session with beats that he composed, that he expressed he liked. So, I encouraged him to write lyrics based on the beats. Participant C started by playing around on a guitar, then lyrics and music came together quickly. The name of the four songwriting titles were *Deprivation* (full transcription found in Appendix G), *Our Night* (Appendix H), *Our Yesterday* (Appendix I), and *Inevitably* (Appendix J). Table 2 illustrates the song titles and the themes of the lyric and interview content.

When analyzing the interview data, there were interesting findings when comparing participants who had songwriting experience and participants who did not have songwriting experience. I found that participants who have had experience with songwriting were more concerned about the quality of the song. For instance, Participant C showed dissatisfaction about the quality of the recording: “It sounds kind of sloppy here and there. If I were to

Table 2

Song titles and lyric themes

Participant	Song Title	Themes
A	Deprivation	Enjoyment, Frustration, Sense of Achievement, Insight, Stress, Relief from Stress
B	Our night	Enjoyment, Sense of Achievement, Insight, Stress, Relief from Stress
C	Our yesterday	Enjoyment
D	Inevitably	Enjoyment, Frustration, Sense of Achievement, Insight, Stress, Relief from Stress.

record it at my own house, I would definitely make it a lot clearer.” Similarly, Participant B said: “The context is good. The recording not so much, like you know, we did it just on a

laptop. I think it could be a lot better, like improved upon, like finesse my voice and everything.” Also, when Participants B and C were writing their songs, they were more concerned with writing the song using popular song structures, such as verse and chorus. Contrarily, Participants A and D, who did not have knowledge about songwriting may have benefited from their ability to be expressive. They simply wrote down their feelings without worrying about rules of song structure.

Further, I decided to disregard Participant C’s data from analysis process because his participation in the interviews was different than the other three participants. When I guided him to talk about his experience, he expressed there was nothing more to talk about during both interviews. Additionally, when he wrote the song, he did not appear to be fully engaged in his own emotional process. He chose to write a song about an intimate relationship. However, when I asked him why he selected the theme of the song, he said, “I picked something that I thought I could write lyrics that were easily relatable, ‘cause everyone goes through relationship thing.” Hence, when he wrote the song, he was more concerned about the listener, instead of focusing on himself. In addition, he expressed concern about my opinions. In the interview, he shared that he was wondering, “Does she (the researcher) think this sounds good?” The detachment from his own emotional experience and expression influenced me to disregard Participant C’s data from the analysis process.

Six themes emerged from data analysis of Participants A, B, and D. These themes were: *enjoyment, frustration, sense of achievement, insight, stress and relief from stress* (See *figure 2*). Since these themes were related to either during songwriting process or the inner process after songwriting, I grouped these themes into two groups:

- Group1, Songwriting process: *Enjoyment, frustration (with struggles of songwriting), sense of achievement*

- Group 2, Inner process: *Stress (frustration with life), insight, relief from stress*

Figure 2 illustrates the categories to themes process.

Songwriting Process

Theme 1: Enjoyment. All participants enjoyed the songwriting experience. They had good feelings about the songwriting experience. Participant A also provided feedback that songwriting made it easier for participants to talk about their stress.

Participant A. Participant A expressed an enjoyment of the songwriting process, and a desire to continue the process: “It was a lot of fun. I’ve never done this before...I would want to continue this process.” Participant A ordered guitar and ukulele and planned to write more music. Furthermore, Participant A described the songwriting experience as “playful” as a means to express stress and challenges:

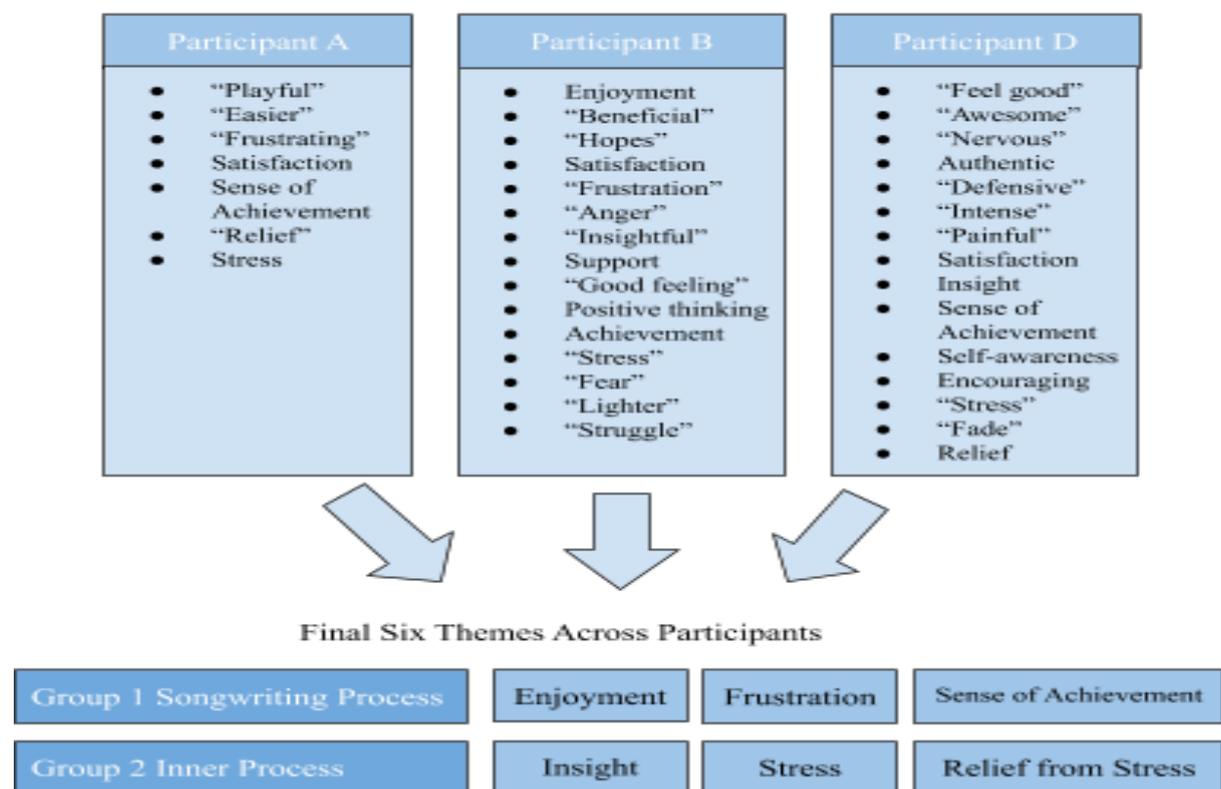


Figure 2. Categories to Themes Process

It kind of makes it a little more playful. Talking about stress and challenges seem a very heavy topic, but then when I can express it in a song, it makes it a little more playful. I think that's why it made it a little easier for me to talk about my feelings.

Participant B. Participant B enjoyed the song he wrote, "It's good...I like certain of the beat and then just like the progression with the lyrics. The lyrics really make the whole picture of the song come together." After listening the song artifact, he noted, "Initially getting those ideas and themes, putting them together, and then hearing the final product, it's cool...It's like a good feeling song."

In addition, Participant B reflected a lot on his song product, and enjoyed both the songwriting and reflecting processes, "It's awesome. It was really cool to just like write a song and reflect on it and just put my feelings and my thoughts out there and mainly with the reflection process on it. Thank you."

Participant D. Participant D enjoyed the song she wrote. When I asked her: "How do you feel after writing about your experience in the song?" She replied, "I feel good. I'm like happy with the melody goes on...I'm pleased the last line...I'm like happy about that...It was good experience...It was fun...Making music is awesome." She laughed and smiled when she talked about her experience. After the second interview. Participant D told me that she was hesitant to come to the session, but that she was glad she did.

Theme 2: Frustration (with struggle of songwriting). Basically, Participants B and C finished their songs independently while I jumped in during the songwriting processes of Participants A and D because both of them got stuck in the middle. Participants A and D, who did not have previous songwriting experience reported frustration when they got stuck during songwriting. Additionally, both of them reported that the presence of my role was helpful during the process.

Participant A. It was the first time for Participant A to write music for a song. In the middle of the songwriting, Participant A played F#m-C#m-D chords on the piano over and over again, but did not know how to move on. When I ask Participant A in the first interview: “What was it like to write the song?” Participant A expressed frustration when she got stuck in the songwriting process, “It was a little frustrating when I got stuck, I didn’t know how to merge the music with the lyrics. And then trying to figure it out playing the same thing over and over again was a little frustrating.”

When I asked Participant A: “Was I being helpful through the process?” Participant A replied:

I’m guessing you have experience with music, and you know music. ‘Cause you know all the chords. Because I didn’t. It really helps that I knew the lyrics part of it, and you knew the music part. And putting it together was a lot easier because you have all that experience. So you made it easier. Your role made this process easier.

Participant D. As a person who did not have previous songwriting experience, Participant D got stuck in the middle of the songwriting, and showed frustration on her face. So I jumped in. I recommended that she let go of the stress, and just sing and hum what she had so far. Then Participant D got inspiration herself. At the interview, when I asked her: “What was it like to write the song?” She replied, “It was hard (laughter). It was tricky. I’ve never done anything like that before. You were really helpful. So I appreciate it. It was definitely like, oh my gosh.”

Theme 3: Sense of achievement. Sense of achievement and confidence was an important result of songwriting experience in the previous songwriting research (Baker et al., 2008). In this research, facing the challenges in songwriting and overcoming them were significant to eliciting a sense of achievement. The participants without songwriting

experience seemed to experience a greater sense of achievement by process than those with experience. Also, songwriting experience evoked Participant B's memory of previous achievement.

Participant A. Participant A experienced difficulties and challenges in writing music because of a lack of previous experience writing music and knowledge of music theory. However, Participant A's ability to overcome the difficulties in songwriting inspired confidence and sense of achievement: "I've never written lyrics and music together... This shows me that it gonna take a little time, but I can do both... 'Cause we created a whole song out of two hours (laughter)."

Participant B. Participant B felt good about his song product and was proud of it, "I think it could be a hit club song." He thought with higher quality of recording, he would make big success on that. He said: "If we were in an actual studio and had like a few hours. I think we'd be able to put this out and make millions of dollars (laughter)." Furthermore, the songwriting experience reminded Participant B about the sense of achievement from other life events: "I made the Dean's List and that's like something that will really push you to be like, I can go on for my masters. I could show that two companies consider and take me in as an employee."

Participant D. Similar to Participant A, Participant D also experienced a hard time in repeating same chords over and over again, but overcoming the challenge gave her the sense of achievement: "It was definitely like, oh my gosh, but we pulled it off. Like we did it (laughter). We came out with the song." After listening the song she wrote, I asked her: "What thoughts come to you after listening to the song?" She replied, "I feel kind of proud of myself. The way I've been able to come to, turns to the way it ended." The other reason that

Participant D felt proud of herself was because she used to hide her feelings after breaking up, but she was able to write a song about it in the experience.

Inner Process

Theme 4: Insight. Songwriting is a typically accepted as a meaningful and insightful experience (Baker et al., 2008; Baker & MacDonald, 2013). The guiding questions of the second interview were focused on reflection. Through reflecting on the song artifact, insight arose naturally.

Participant A. Participant A experienced hard times in songwriting, yet also gained a lot from the experience. A significant insight that Participant A discovered was finding a coping mechanism for the stress:

For someone who's really sad, drawing happy faces make them happier. So that would be their coping mechanism... Instead of just avoiding it (stress), I can now write it out, put it into a song, and then that's how I move on from it.

Participant A had this sense of feeling because Participant A found it was easier to communicate challenges through the song; "I found it's easier to communicate my challenges through the song, the lyrics form than talking about it."

Finding a coping mechanism in the experience was meaningful for Participant A, because Participant A lacked supportive resources. Miscommunication existed between Participant A and peers, and between family members. When I asked Participant A: "If you feel challenging or feel stressed, do you talk with somebody?" Participant A replied in a weak tone, "No." Participant A also tried counseling services on campus, but complained about it. Going to gym was the only way for Participant A to relieve stress. As such, the songwriting experience gave participant A an additional coping mechanism to use under stressful conditions.

Participant B. Participant B delineated his self-reflection experience about the song as “insightful.” I asked him: “What was it like to write the song?” He replied, “Give me feel hopeful. In the sense, it just like writing music in general.” The most significant insight that Participant B found was the real meaning of love from family. Participant B used to study in a different university, where he had hard time dealing with daily life. He transferred to SUNY New Paltz and moved back to live with family. His family help him with daily life events and stays with him when he feels bad. He shared how his family always being supportive:

Like my family, they’ve always been there for me, no matter what’s going on in my life, like the great times, and really bad times. They’ve been there for me and it’s not even like sincere gratitude. It’s just love, like right there. As long as I got my family, things will get better and we’ll just have each other until move forward.

In the song, similarly, Participant B wrote, “As long as we together, things really will get better.” I believe this positive resource encouraged Participant B to always look at the positive side when he experienced difficulties. As he stated:

We might be in this hard time or dark time, but it’s like you’ve got to look at the brighter side of life. Although it gets really hard to do that, that’s really going to get you through to the next day. All things that are going good.

Additionally, the experience evoked Participant B’s sense of belonging to the current university, which was beneficial for his mental health (Karaman & Tarim, 2018). Studying at the previous university and living with roommates was struggle. After transferred, he can live with family to receive more support. And he felt happier at current university. He reflected it on his music production as well: “My earlier production is like dark and it’s in the minor chords. But now, I found a passion here at New Paltz, I’ve been able to make like happier

music and stuff.” In the meantime, he shared his solid short-term, long-term, and dream job with me.

Participant D. Participant D said her song was about a “break up” and what she learned from it. She was the only person who employed a narrative form to build up the song, which delineated how she prayed for love, the person appeared, friendship, friendship turns into love, break up, and end. Songwriting allowed Participant D to really sit with her feelings, and to acknowledge it, “I’m happy with the place I’m in right now. Writing the song kind of gave me a space to really reflect on it. And actually think of where am I standing...Like feel that’s ok if I’m not fine about it.” When she faced her real feelings, she realized it was different than she thought it would be: “I thought that would be scared. Because it would be painful. And it wasn’t painful. Listening to the song, I thought it would be embarrassing, but it’s not like that bad.”

One important thing the songwriting experience evoked was acknowledging Participant D’s own feelings. Throughout the two interviews, she emphasized many times how she liked the last line of the lyrics “The most important love of my life is me.” As she said, “I think just like the realization of look at your own self-awareness is like, your feeling is matter, just as much as anyone else’s.”

Songwriting also gave Participant D a new insight on looking onto her “break up” and feeling towards it:

I feel better about them (break up) now than I do before. ‘Cause before, I was like closing my eyes to them. And now I’m working through it, and seeing that it’s not as scary as I thought it was gonna be. Like I can do this kind of stuff, and kind of like face my feeling and still gonna be ok. Like survived.

Theme 5: Stress (frustration with life). Songwriting is a powerful form of self-expression. All participants expressed different types of stress in songwriting and interviews. The themes of their songs were rooted in their own stressful experiences, as participants chose *sleep deprivation*, *financial hardship* and *intimate relationships* as the focus of their songs. These stressors led to feelings of frustration in Participants A, B, and D. This finding echoed the findings in the report by ACHA-NCHA (2018) that stress can cause a series of negative feelings for participants.

Participant A. When I went through the list of the possible themes (Appendix A) that the song could be about, Participant A decided the theme of the song very quickly, “Sleep deprivation stood out more than any of the other ones because I actually don’t get enough sleep and to the point where I would wake up a few minutes before my alarm every day.”

Participant A started having sleep deprivation between sophomore and junior year. It became a chronic suffering. As Participant A noted, “It happened almost every day, every night.” Participant A also wrote it in the lyrics, “I’m tossing and turning at 2 am once again...falling asleep during the day, staying awake through the night.”

Pressures from family was another heavy layer of stress for Participant A, who was the first one in college in the family:

I still stress because I care so much about their (parents) opinion. And them being parents creates another whole layer of stress. Their expectations of me...My parents, well, my mom mostly measures success as how quickly you can get a job. So she doesn’t understand that it’s very normal now for undergrad students to finish their bachelor and then find nothing. She thinks that you are gonna be guaranteed the job as long as you finish.

When Participant A talking about this, I saw tears were in her eyes. After the interview, Participant A emailed me a suggestion to “have tissues during the interviews and songwriting process, some people might cry.”

In addition to family pressure, Participant A described herself as “very introverted” and reported stress from miscommunication with friends:

Some friends when they want to make plans and I keep saying no, or that I have other plans, or I cancel on them. They think that it is because I have something better to do or I’m rejecting them, but it’s really, I just need my alone time. And I had a friend who would get offended when I say that I want to be alone. The way she heard it was I’d rather be alone than be around you. And that’s not it at all. I just need my alone time once in a while.

Participant A was a little agitated with fast talking pace when sharing about this. Participant A also wrote it in the lyrics, “Leave me alone, but not too long, just a moment.”

All of these stressors, sleep deprivation, family pressure, and miscommunication with friends, caused Participant A frustration. Participant A’s voice tone became when talking about stress. Tears were in Participant A’s eyes.

Participant B. At the beginning of songwriting, Participant B wrote down three words, “finances,” “anxiety,” and “hopefulness,” on the paper. As he said, Participant B was experiencing financial hardship. He talked about his severe condition: “I’m being like in a financial hardship... We have to really struggle and find our way to like just survive like the basic necessities... eat low quality of food.” He thought that more money could bring him happiness, even it’s not permanent, “Just having like more money, really the ability to go on more trips with my family or like vacations and stuff, there’s this kind of happiness that comes with.”

Participant B took a loan to pay for his undergraduate study, which means he needed to find a job and pay back the loan after graduation. He witnessed some people who did not find a formal job after college. These all added to Participant B's financial stress:

I've seen like a lot of kids come out of school and then moved back in with their parents. There's struggle after college, really find your way in this world and find a solid career that will pay you a solid amount.

Participant B was not expressive emotionally when talking about his financial hardship. He kept talking in a low and even pace. However, he used some words to illustrate the frustration towards stress, such as "fear," "anxiety," "anger," "frustration," "upset," and "sad."

Participant D. Participant D's stress came from the "break up" that happened two months ago. When I asked her: "How did you decide the theme of the song?" She replied, "I kind of knew like coming into it. Definitely feels really stress in my life. It's like a huge stress earlier...It was just sitting on my stomach." Meanwhile, she took out her note book and showed me a large passage of phrases she wrote after break up. She said: "It was really intense time in my life...really intense and painful break up when it ended. It hurts. I cried a lot."

Theme 6: Relief from stress. Expressing stress in songwriting served to bring a sense of relief to the participants. For Participants A and D, overcoming the challenges in songwriting also made them feel a sense of "release."

Participant A. In the first interview, Participant A described the songwriting experience as "huge relief" with smile and long breath out. When I asked "How do you feel after writing about your experience in the song?" Participant A replied, "A little relief, cause I

get to put words to how I'm feeling." Besides that, overcoming the challenge in songwriting also brought a sense of relief for Participant A:

It was a little frustrating when I got stuck...and then trying to figure it out, playing the same thing over and over again was a little frustration. But then there was a huge moment of relief when we were able to get through it.

Participant B. Songwriting provided a sense of relief for Participant B because he wrote what was in his mind on paper thus making it tangible. He noted:

Since I was able to get some stuff off my chest, I feel a little lighter and like better about the situation... There's just a lot of stuff that was going on in my head that morning and like other things I was feeling and like being able to write it out and record it alleviate that kind of tension I was feeling.

Participant D. After the songwriting, Participant D said, "It's (stress) kind of fade anyway." She thought her music was "really honest." When I asked her: "What thoughts come to you after listening to the song?" She answered, "I guess like peace. More peace of the situation." Participant D felt relieved because she gained enormous insights and growths after the experience. She noted:

It (songwriting) does feel therapeutic. I think I've never used music in this way for my own personal reflection. But it does feel really therapeutic. I'm grateful for the opportunity that you gave me, to come and do this with you. I think it would be really helpful for me.

Discussion

Overall, participants had enjoyable experiences in the songwriting process. For Participants A and D, who did not have previous songwriting experience, they experienced frustration when they got stuck. However, they overcame the challenges and experienced a

sense of achievement. This finding supported Baker and MacDonald (2013) assertion that songwriting experience is not necessary when working with college students for self-expression and self-reflection. Further, in the present study, participants without experience seemed to gain more meaningful experience in this research.

In this study, that Participants A, B, and D articulated experiencing associated with stress as a college student. Their stress came from different sources, like sleep deprivation, family pressure, financial hardships, intimate relationships, and frustration toward the feeling of stress. This finding was similar to the report of ACHA-NCHA (2018), which stated the top five college students' stressors were academics, finances, sleep difficulties, intimate relationships, and family problems. Additionally, compared with conventional verbal therapy, songwriting provided an alternative outlet for self-expression in associated with stress. As Participant A stated: "Talking about stress and challenges seem a very heavy topic, but then when I can express it in a song, it makes it a little more playful." Participant A believed that it was a little easier to express feelings in songwriting than talking form. Furthermore, listening, singing to own song artifact and reflecting on it were insightful for participants. Participant A found coping mechanism for stress; Participant B explored real meaning of family love, looking at positive sides of things, and found sense of belonging for current university; Participant D found the encouragement to face her authentic feeling and acknowledged her feeling and thoughts toward the break up.

One problem that was confirmed in this research was that college students did not get enough support in regard to their mental health. Some of them, like Participant A, lacked supportive resources when feel stressed. Participant A told me that there is no one to talk with when stressed. Participant A also experienced counseling center at campus, but found they were not helpful because they put a cap at how many times (seven times) a student can see a

counselor per semester. This research recommends that the administration department of the university educate university students on what resources they can use in promoting mental health and to provide more options and more opportunities for university students.

Considerations for Application to Clinical Practice

As noted in the results section regarding Participant C, even a songwriting experienced designed in a supportive manner that has the potential to elicit emotional response may cause participants to react in a variety of ways. Participant C reported feeling “a little vulnerable,” and seemed to be resistant to exploring the emotional content of his composition. For instance, Participant C said:

I reply to your email like a stranger, not super vulnerable, but like a little vulnerable. I've been on the stage. I've singing in front of people, still uncomfortable, or sometimes timid to play. You wanna with the person, and kind of open up like that kind of way.

In addition, before the second interview, I invited Participant C to sing before reflecting on the song, but he rejected. “I don't feel really like singing right now.”

This finding is significant, because resistance is a natural part of clinical process in therapy and will likely manifest in music therapy practice. According to Austin and Dvorkin (1998), clients are often unwilling to make music or sing because music could influence a person's defensive mechanisms and approach the person's feeling more effectively than words. I concluded that Participant C's resistance emerged to prevent him from disclosing personal feelings. In other words, the limited time to build rapport and relationship made it difficult for Participant C to engage authentically. Similarly, Participant D said “I was a little bit more defensive that I couldn't let myself feels vulnerable immediately, cause I don't wanna like burst into tears while we were writing it together.” However, she felt “more open”

during second session. Hence, I believe in future similar practices, it is ideal to allow the therapeutic relationship to develop over time so as to build trust and facilitate more open self-expression. However, this study showed that songwriting is effective means of self-expression even in one session. This is typical for acute music therapy settings, where there are limited opportunities for repeated sessions.

Finally, there is a need for alternative approaches to mental health counseling in college students. This study suggested that college students at SUNY New Paltz have negative or mixed feelings about counseling services. Therapeutic songwriting was presented as an inviting option for students seeking to work on personal issues such as stress and depression. This study makes a compelling argument for therapeutic songwriting to be incorporated into campus mental health services for students. From a campus mental health perspectives, the impact that therapeutic songwriting has on students is part of the argument for why songwriting as potential to help students during intake and assessment, as well as to identify what is happening for themselves and their own needs.

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Appendix A

10-step songwriting process protocol

- Step 1 Decide the theme of the song. This step focuses on the stressor or feelings that the participant wants to express. The researcher will provide two theme columns for the participant to brainstorm. a) themes: Academics, finances, sleep difficulties, intimate relationships, and family problems; b) feelings: hopelessness, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, depression, and anger.
- Step 2 Determine which will be written first, lyrics or music
- Step 3 Write rough lyrics for content without worrying about exact word rhythm or rhyme
- Step 4 Choose a style and feel for the song, using the rough lyrics as a starting point. The researcher will provide multiple modes, genres, and patterns to participants to brainstorm.
- Step 5 Craft and design lyric rhythm and rhyme
- Step 6 Determine chords and progression
- Step 7 Add melody over chords
- Step 8 Combine 7-9 above in verse-chorus song form
- Step 9 Add additional accompaniment and stylistic features to make song unique
- Step 10 Record the song

The outline of the 10-step songwriting process protocol was adapted from Krout's (2005, p. 211) songwriting process.

Appendix B

Recruitment Email

Subject: Music Therapy Songwriting Research Recruitment

Greetings!

My name is Jue Zhang and I am a graduate student from music therapy department at SUNY New Paltz. I'm working on my thesis research about the topic of using music therapy songwriting to help college students with self-expression and self-reflection. I would like to invite you to participate in this research! The total estimated research duration will be two sessions. The first session will take around 2 hours. It involves a songwriting process with assistance of the researcher, followed by the first interview with guiding questions regards to the songwriting experience. The second session, which will be scheduled within one week of the first session, will last around 30 minutes. This session will include listening to the recording of the written song and a brief interview. Some guiding questions regards to the reflection on the song will be asked. No individually identifying data will be collected.

If you feel you are under pressure as a college student and want to find an alternative way to express your stress, I encourage you to participate in this research. Participation is completely voluntary and will be confidential. You must be at 18 years old in order to participate.

We do not anticipate any risk in your participation other than you may become uncomfortable answering some of the questions. Although you may not receive direct benefit from your participation, others may ultimately benefit from the songwriting experience itself. This study has been approved by the SUNY New Paltz Human Research Ethics Board,

however if you have any questions, feel free to contact me: zhangj7@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu or my thesis advisor Heather Wagner, wagnerh@newpaltz.edu. If you have questions about your rights as a human research participant, you can contact the SUNY New Paltz Human Research Ethics Board at 845-257-3282 or HREBsecretary@newpaltz.edu.

Sincerely,

Jue Zhang

Graduate Music Therapy Student

Music Therapy Department

State University of New York at New Paltz

Appendix C
Questionnaire

- Gender:

_____ Male

_____ Female

_____ Other

- Age?

- Are you music major?

_____ Yes

_____ No

- What's your academic major:

- year at college:

_____ Freshman

_____ Sophomore

_____ Junior

_____ Senior

_____ Graduate

- Race:

_____ Asian/Asian-American

_____ Black/African-American

_____ Hispanic/Latino

_____ White

_____ Other

- Nationality:

_____ USA

_____ International

- Are you currently looking for an alternative way to express your pressure/stress as a college student?

_____ Yes

_____ No

- Do you have any mental diagnosis?

_____ Yes

_____ No

- Do you have any previous songwriting experience?

_____ Yes

_____ No

Appendix D

Using music therapy songwriting to help college students with
self-expression and self-reflection project consent Form

Name of the researcher: Jue Zhang

University affiliation: State University of New York at New Paltz

Position and degree: Grad music therapy student

Description of the research: This is the researcher's thesis project. The purpose of the research is to explore the impact of songwriting in college students' self-expression and self-reflection, how songwriting is perceived by college students, and the preferred themes that college students express in the songwriting.

Participants: A total number of 3 students at SUNY New Paltz will be included in the research. They will be arranged in individual sessions. Participants cannot be music majors or have been diagnosed with any mental health disorders.

Procedures: Participation will require two meetings with the researcher. The first session will last approximately 2 hours. The participant will engage in songwriting with assistance of the researcher. The song will be recorded using Garageband and followed by the first interview regarding to the songwriting experience.

The second interview will occur within one week of the songwriting session. After listening to the recording of the written song, a brief interview will be conducted to reflect on the song. It will last approximately 30 minutes.

Risks & discomforts of participation: There are no anticipated risks in participation other than possible emotional discomfort in response to the emotional qualities of musical self-expression. The participants may disclose personal information, mood, stress, etc. based

on their willingness in the songwriting and interview. Participants are able to decline to answer any questions, and can stop the process at any time.

Expected benefits to subjects or to others: Participating in the songwriting experience may be perceived as beneficial. Participants may experience stress release, improved mood, finding meaning, and a sense of accomplishment. Participation will help inform the music therapy about the application of the songwriting with college students.

Confidentiality of records/data: The two interviews will be audiotaped and maintained in a MacBook with password secured along with the song recording. The documents will be coded as first initial and numbers, such as J0001 for song recording, J0002 for interview one, and J0003 for interview two. The researcher is the only person who has the password to the MacBook. The interview audiotapes and song recording will be used for data analysis and thesis presentation only. If the researcher decides to publish the research in the future, additional consent form will be asked to sign.

Data storage: Data will be stored in Macbook that is password secured. The researcher is the only person who knows the password.

Photographing or audio/video recording of participants: Please sign below if you are willing to have the song recorded and the two interview audiotaped.

Contact information:

Researcher's name: Jue Zhang

Email address: zhangj7@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu

Faculty advisor: Heather Wagner, PhD, MT-BC

Email address: wagnerh@newpaltz.edu

One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.

HREB contact information and human rights statement: For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the State University of New York at New Paltz Human Research Ethics Board (which is a group of people who review the research to protect your rights) at 845-257-3282.

The Human Research Ethics Board of the State University of New York at New Paltz has determined that this research meets the criteria for human subjects according to Federal guidelines.

Voluntary nature of participation: Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to answer any questions and may terminate at any point of the research for any reason.

Withdrawal of participants and data retention: Your participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty. All the information you have provided will be erased and destroyed at the point you have left the study.

I have read or been informed of the information about this study. I understand what is expected of me as a participant of the research. I hereby consent to participate in the study and discussed the above information with the researcher.

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Date

Date

Appendix E

HREB Approval of Submission



Human Research Ethics Board

Office of Sponsored Programs

800 Hawk Dr. New Paltz, NY 12561

Old Main B120

APPROVAL OF SUBMISSION

February 11, 2019

Jue Zhang

zhangj7@hawkmail.newpaltz.edu

Dear Jue Zhang:

On 2/9/2019, the Human Research Ethics Board (H.R.E.B.) approved the following submission:

Type of Review:	Initial Study
Title of Study:	Using music therapy songwriting to help college students with self-expression and self-reflection
Investigator:	Jue Zhang
IRB ID:	STUDY00001346

Funding:	None
Grant ID:	None
Documents Reviewed:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jue Zhang Research Protocol Application-long-form updated 02082019.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Recruitment Email.pdf, Category: Recruitment Materials; • 11th draft Thesis Proposal 02082019.docx, Category: IRB Protocol; • Consent Form.pdf, Category: Consent Form;
Expedited	(7)(a)

The materials for the project referenced above were reviewed and approved by the Human Research Ethics Board (H.R.E.B.) by Expedited Review.

In conducting this study, you are required to follow the requirements listed in the *Investigator's Guide to Research with Human Participants*, which can be found by navigating to the IRB Library within the PACS IRB module.

IRB approval is given with the understanding that the most recently approved procedures will be followed and the most recently approved consenting documents will be used. If modifications are needed, those changes may not be initiated until such modifications have been submitted to the IRB for review and have been granted approval.

As principal investigator for this study involving human participants, you have institutional responsibilities as follows:

1. Ensuring that no subjects are enrolled prior to the study's approval date.
2. Ensuring that the HREB is notified via PACS IRB module of:
 - All Reportable Information in accordance with the "Reportable New Information" Smart Form.
 - Project closure/completion by the "Continuing Review/Modification/Study Closure" Smart Form.
3. Ensuring that the protocol is followed as approved by HREB unless a protocol modification is prospectively approved.
4. Ensuring that changes in research procedures, recruitment or consent processes are not initiated without prior HREB review and approval, except where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to subjects. In these exceptional instances, you are required to notify the HREB using the appropriate PACS form.
5. Ensuring that the study is conducted in compliance with all HREB decisions, conditions, and requirements.
6. Bearing responsibility for all actions of the staff and sub-investigators with regard to the protocol.
7. Bearing responsibility for securing any other required approvals before research begins.

If you have any questions, please contact the Human Research Ethics Board (H.R.E.B.) at either (845) 257-3282 or by email:

HREB Chair: hrebchair@newpaltz.edu

HREB Secretary: hrebsecretary@newpaltz.edu

Appendix F

Interview Questions

Questions for the initial interview:

1. How do you feel after writing about your experience in the song?
2. How do you feel about that experience now?
3. What was it like to write the song?
4. How did you decide the theme of the song?
5. What message/feeling did you want to express in the song?
6. Is there any other thing important that you want to mention?
7. Will you try songwriting again in the future if you feel stressed?

Adapted from Baker and Krout's (2012, p. 137) guiding questions.

Questions for the second interview:

1. What do you think about the song you wrote?
2. What is it like to listen to the song?
3. How do you feel after listening to the song?
4. What thoughts come to you after listening to the song?
5. Is there any other thing important that you want to mention?
6. Are there different feelings you are experiencing listening to the song compared to when you wrote it?

Adapted from Baker and Krout's (2012, p. 137) guiding questions.

Appendix G

1

Deprivation

The musical score for 'Deprivation' is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled '1', features a Grand Piano accompaniment with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody consists of eighth-note triplets. The lyrics for this system are: "I'm tossing and turning at 2am once again". The second system, labeled '2', features a Piano accompaniment with a treble clef and the same key signature. The melody continues with eighth-note triplets. The lyrics for this system are: "Fears of missing out keeps me Awake By all that's at stake I just want a longer break". The third system, labeled '7', continues the piano accompaniment with eighth-note triplets. The lyrics are: "Leave me alone but not too long Just a moment Falling asleep during the day". The fourth system, labeled '10', continues the piano accompaniment with eighth-note triplets. The lyrics are: "Staying awake through the night Ah... Ah". The fifth system, labeled '13', shows the final measure of the piano accompaniment with eighth-note triplets. The lyrics are: "Ah... Ah".

Appendix H

Our night

Verse

I've been trying to chase a bag, buy things I never had

Maybe if I had more, things wouldn't be so sad

They say more money is more problems

If I have more, then I could solve them

Rolling clean down in Harlem, shine so bright it will scare them

We be stressing about money, make you break up with your honey

Cannot laugh if is not funny, it gets dark but then it gets sunny

Hook

This is our night (4x)

If it's out of mind then it's out of sight

Don't matter let's take flights

Just know that this is our life and I know that it feels right

Verse 2

As long as we together, things really will get better

Don't matter on the weather, will still do doubleheaders

Woah got to catch up on my flows

Woah got to catch up on my goals

Break it down, bring it up if you're feeling down

Energy on high every time I come around

Let's go, let's roll.

(<https://soundcloud.com/niki007-1/our-night/s-NISUi>)

Appendix I

Our Yesterday

VERSE

A D G D A

Im talking about having nothing to say

A D G D A

Nothing feels like you do, dressed up in your own way

A D G D A

Days turn into weeks, and smoke turns into haze

A D G D A

Im thinking about our yesterday

Chorus

D E A

Im running round in circles in my head

 D E A

I dont want her like I wanted her back then

 D E

Id rather light myself on fire

 Db B A

And run naked through the streets

 B G A

Then ask myself is she right for me

D G A

Can I survive going crazy every time we meet?

A G E D A

Life doesn't care about your plans, it snaps back like a rubber band

G E D A

You can hold it in your hands, don't be surprised when it breaks again

D E A

Im running round in circles in my head

D E A

I dont want her like I wanted her back then

D E

Id rather light myself on fire

Db B A

And run naked through the streets

B G A

Then ask myself is she right for me

D G A

Can I survive going crazy every time we meet

(<https://soundcloud.com/niki007-1/ouryesterday/s-9exz5>)

Appendix J

Inevitably

F G Am F G

I prayed for you, you appeared in my life

F G Am F G Am

Close my eyes, everything feels so right

F Em F Em F G Am

Friendship spun into love, my heart didn't have control

F E F Em F G Am

Thought I found my great love, at only 19 years old

Bb Am Gm Am Gm Am Gm Am

But we were so young and so naive, everything happened inevitably

Fm Gm Fm Gm

The higher you climb, the further you fall

Fm Gm Gm Bb

Should've known better than to give you my all

F Em F Em F G Am

Letting go is hard and slow, but now I finally see

F Em F E F G F

The most important love in my life is always gonna be me

(<https://soundcloud.com/niki007-1/inevitably/s-uwIb6>)