Spring 5-21-2022

Fostering Self-Awareness Through Songwriting: Development and Heuristic Self-Inquiry of a Method for Graduate Music Therapy Students

Emily Damore
edamore@lesley.edu

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Capstone Thesis

Lesley University

April 2022

Emily Damore

Music Therapy

Dr. Rebecca Zarate

Abstract

Self-awareness is considered a necessary competency and professional responsibility for graduate music therapy students to develop during their master's training. However, few concretized methods have been established to support students in growing this skill. Existing research examining songwriting's impact on music therapy students provides preliminary evidence that it can effectively foster self-awareness and facilitate personal growth, professional identity development, and processing of clinical experiences (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Viega & Baker, 2019). This thesis continues to explore the connection between songwriting and self-awareness by investigating a student-created method designed for this research by the researcher-participant—a 25-year-old, white, female graduate music therapy student interning at a children's hospital. The method was researched using Sultan's (2020) humanistic heuristic inquiry design to contribute a direct student account to the current literature. The method yielded one song and two written reflections which were analyzed through musical microanalysis and inductive analysis. This revealed seven themes which were organized under two categories— Song as a Self-Created Container and Areas of Increased Self-Awareness. Results indicate that songwriting was effective in fostering several aspects the researcher-participant's self-awareness. It was found that the method supported meaningful engagement with self-awareness by providing a multimodal iterative process. Findings imply that this method could be useful for students developing their self-awareness and supervisors supporting supervisees in that process. More research is needed to determine the generalizability of these results. Suggestions to improve the method for future use and research are provided.

Introduction

Throughout my education and clinical training, self-awareness has frequently been emphasized by professors and supervisors. Their words were validated by my experiences, as some of the most significant insights about my music therapy practice arose from moments of self-awareness. Still, those moments were fleeting rather than an intentional exercise in professional identity development. My experiences with self-awareness do not appear to be isolated, as undergraduate (Abbott, 2018; Baker & Krout, 2012; Wheeler, 2002) and graduate (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011) music therapy students have expressed similar experiences. What methods, then, can be developed to support music therapy students foster their self-awareness?

In thesis, I argue that songwriting is a reflective, arts-based process through which students can increase their capacity for self-awareness. In turn, I have developed a method that targets this aspect of professional development. The method was informed by both my lived experience as a music therapy student and existing research investigating songwriting's therapeutic and educational benefits. This method is then explored through heuristic self-inquiry, musical microanalysis, and inductive analysis to provide a detailed, student-reported account of the experiences the method facilitated.

Songwriting is an accepted approach in music therapy practice, both currently and historically (Baker, 2015; Wigram & Baker, 2005). As a flexible, narrative process, it lends itself to facilitating a plethora of therapeutic outcomes such as self-reflection, self-critique, identity exploration, and meaning making (Baker, 2015). The approach has been increasingly prevalent in music therapy literature within the last 15 years. Edited volumes and scholarly texts, such as the work of Baker & Wigram (2005) and Baker (2015), reflect the efforts made to define and legitimize songwriting methods and their clinical application. Studies like Baker et al.'s (2015)

research on songwriting with neurorehabilitation patients are also starting to emerge more frequently, thus furthering the amount of empirical evidence of songwriting's therapeutic outcomes.

Similarly, songwriting is also beginning to be researched as an approach to music therapy education. This research has sought to build preliminary evidence that outcomes facilitated by therapeutic songwriting can also be achieved when used with students completing clinical training. The research has also provided qualitative data that indicates songwriting's outcomes are not only achievable when used with student populations but are also effective in addressing the developmental needs of students in training. In particular, songwriting's ability to foster self-awareness has been repeatedly exhibited in this research. Baker & Krout's (2011, 2012) studies on peer collaborative songwriting demonstrated that the method effectively promoted self-awareness (Baker & Krout, 2011) and deepened students' understanding of how their personal identity effects their professional identity and practice (Baker & Krout, 2012). Case examples provided by Viega & Baker's (2019) also exemplify how songwriting can help students integrate their personal selves with their professional selves by increasing their understanding of these two identities as separate yet interconnected.

Students and professionals from different professions have also investigated how songwriting expanded their engagement with self-awareness. In her research, Fox (2018), an art therapist, found that songwriting helped her identify and then process shadow material. The personal growth she experienced through songwriting lead to significant growth in her art therapy practice. Turner (2017), a community musician, found that songwriting was the catalyst for her realization that her personal self influences her professional self. She also noted that songwriting helped her use reflexivity with more authenticity.

The body of research studying the relationship between songwriting and music therapy students' self-awareness is growing. However, despite education and training being the focal point of this research, there is a distinct lack of the student perspective. With this thesis, I hoped to contribute this missing perspective. I hoped that this will not only to fill a gap in the literature, but also demonstrate the value of including students' lived experiences as the field continues to expand and refine itself. By directly applying this method to my training experiences, I hoped to learn its strengths and weaknesses. This knowledge would help me improve the method for future use and research, as well as inform my future endeavors in method creation. Lastly, as a music therapy student in my final year of training, I hoped that this method would be successful in helping me develop my capacity for self-awareness, thus strengthening my understanding of my music therapy practice and professional identity as I transition from a student to a new professional.

Literature Review

Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is an important competency for music therapy students to learn during clinical training. It is cited as a necessary competency and professional responsibility in the American Music Therapy Association's Standards for Education and Clinical Training (2017), Professional Competencies (2013), and Code of Ethics (2019). It is also referenced as a required competency within Lesley University's Expressive Therapies Department Learning Contract for Students (personal communication, July 2021). Self-awareness serves as a foundation from which students can meaningfully and effectively engage in the lifelong process of synthesizing one's "values and interests with the professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired

throughout one's training and career" (Ducheny et al., 1997), otherwise referred to as professional identity development (Baker & Krout, 2011; Orkibi, 2012).

Self-awareness—defined here as the ability to "recognize the impact of one's own feelings, attitudes, and actions on the client and the therapy process" (AMTA, 2013, 9.1) is most often discussed in the literature in relation to theory and practice. Such literature reflects how self-awareness is conceptualized and implemented within the field. For instance, Camilleri's (2001) article summarized the music therapy competencies that self-awareness facilitates and enhances within a humanistic framework. She stated self-awareness leads to improved authenticity and presence because it allows music therapists to share genuine interactions with clients while maintaining the therapeutic environment through their presence and music. Self-awareness also improves music therapists' ability to identify their emotions and boundaries, as well as the ability to manage them in session. This enhances therapist availability to meet client needs. Self-awareness increases the depth and quality of empathy by allowing music therapists to immerse themselves in a client's emotions without disconnecting from their own experience of the present moment or from the focus of treatment. Lastly, a self-aware music therapist models this way of being for clients, potentially helping them achieve their therapeutic goals. Camilleri argues that self-awareness is particularly important for music therapist because music inherently communicates aspects of the self. Therefore, music therapists must attend to the impact of their music on the therapeutic process in addition to the impact of their feelings, attitudes, and actions.

Writing Methods for Self-Awareness

Within the existing literature on fostering music therapy students' self-awareness, various forms of writing are commonly mentioned. In their paper on reflexive journal writing, Barry & O'Callaghan (2008) posit that this method expanded Barry's capability for self-awareness.

Previously, reflexive journaling was only mentioned in the literature as a data collection method. The purpose of the paper was to describe the use of reflexive journal writing as a method for reflecting on clinical practice. The method consists of four steps which were alternated between in a fluid manner: descriptive journal writing, extending self critiquing and understanding, integration of new insights into practice, and reflexive evaluation. Barry utilized this method throughout her clinical training. After completing training, Barry found themes in her journal that implied five benefits of reflexive journaling. The benefits most relevant to this thesis were practice development and self-evaluation and supervision. Practice development refers to the authors' report that reflexive journaling allowed Barry to practice using self-awareness, insight, and analytical thinking. This supported the improvement of these skills. Self-evaluation and supervision refers to the authors' report that reflexive journaling engaged Barry in a process of critiquing and assessing her therapeutic involvement. This helped her make meaning of her clinical experiences, as well as gain new perspective on these experiences. The findings of this descriptive account cannot be generalized to all music therapy students. However, it does reflect how journal writing has become an established, yet unstandardized method of self-learning within music therapy education.

Practicum logs have also been established as a method to foster the self-awareness of music therapy students. To better understand teaching and learning concepts common in student practicum logs, Abbott (2018) conducted a qualitative study on the contents of these logs. The research aimed to identify what concepts related to documentation, objective observations, subjective assessments, and personal experiences of therapy can be found in student logs. A convenience sample of 15 undergraduate students attending the same university participated. Participants completed the logs as they normally would according to their program's

requirements, yielding 130 logs to be analyzed. The guiding template for logs was created using Kolb's Experiential Learning Model and consisted of three columns. In this study, only the "subjective assessment" column was analyzed. Data was analyzed using inductive coding and interpretative analysis. The validity of the author's coding was confirmed by a consultant researcher with over 20 years of experience as a music therapist. This resulted in 19 teaching/learning concepts, which were then organized into six subgroups falling under one of two categories: music therapy treatment and how to be a music therapist. The author found evidence that participating students used the logs to practice self-awareness. However, students also expressed a need for more learning tools aimed at strengthening self-awareness. The author suggests that music therapy educators need to create more methods for addressing self-awareness, as well as other aspects of professional development.

The literature above displays that writing can be an effective way to foster self-awareness in music therapy students. However, it also highlights the shortcomings of writing methods—namely the lack of standardization, lack of systematic research evaluating the various writing methods, and the preliminary evidence that student learning needs are not sufficiently met through written methods alone. Orkibi's (2012) research examining creative arts therapies (CAT) students' relationship to their modality may provide insight into why written methods are insufficient. This study was conducted from the theory that, due to the interdisciplinary nature of CAT, it is equally important for students to engage in their chosen modality during training as it is to learn clinical skills. The purpose of the study was to investigate how masters level CAT students experience their relationship to their modality throughout their training. Data was collected from open-ended questionnaires which were emailed to all graduate CAT students at a university in Israel. Notably, there is no music therapy program at this school and answers were

solely provided by art therapy, dance therapy, and drama therapy students. The first survey, which focused on the pre-training phase and beginning student phase of professional development, was administered in fall of 2009. The second, which focused on the advanced student phase, was administered in spring of 2010. Student responses were analyzed using a six-phase thematic analysis. The results showed that, during the pre-training phase, students reported engaging in their modality frequently and focused on the aesthetic qualities of their art. During the beginning student and advanced student phase, students reported that they increasingly conceptualized their modality as an expressive, healing process rather than a product. However, students also reported that their personal engagement in their modality drastically diminished. Most students reported engaging in their modality only in training contexts. Further, students reported that this resulted in personal and professional feelings of disconnection from the self. From these findings, Orkibi suggests that arts engagement is essential to CAT students' professional identity development because it promotes authentic use of their modality in therapy and prevents decentralizing the arts from clinical practice. He also implies that training programs should incorporate more opportunities for students to engage in personal arts engagement.

Therapeutic Songwriting

Songwriting is an accepted approach in music therapy, commonly used to elicit self-reflection and self-expression (Baker, 2015). In their edited volume about the methods and clinical applications of songwriting, Baker and Wigram define therapeutic 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 communications needs of the client" (Baker & Wigram, p. 16, 2005). The authors created this text to formalize methods and techniques of therapeutic songwriting through empirical practice,

thus expanding the literature and the development of the profession. They noted that the previous literature had mainly focused on the therapeutic value and outcomes of therapeutic songwriting. Less had been written on how to implement the approach. In each chapter of this text, a different method of therapeutic songwriting is described, including information about the population the method is used with, the therapeutic goals it addresses, the theoretical orientation of the method, and the preparation, procedures, and considerations needed when applying the method. In the final chapter, Wigram compares these various approaches to extract which elements of songwriting support which populations and needs. He also proposes a broad, flexible method to guide the general use of therapeutic songwriting.

Baker (2015) later published another text important to solidifying the methods and applications of therapeutic songwriting. In addition to presenting research and practice developments that occurred since the aforementioned edited volume, Baker provided more thorough descriptions of various songwriting methods. Songwriting methods were categorized by whether they emphasize lyric creation, music creation, or both. Strategic reasons for use, limitations, and contraindications are listed for each category of methods. Also, Baker goes further in depth about contextual and environmental factors that influence the therapeutic songwriting process, as well as methods situated within specific theoretical orientations to practice.

The literature also contains research studies focused on evidencing the outcomes of therapeutic songwriting. For instance, a study conducted by Baker et al. (2015) explored flow and meaningfulness as mechanisms of change in therapeutic songwriting with patients in neurorehabilitation. The authors hypothesized that improvements in self-concept would positively correlate with lower levels of anxiety, depression, and negative affect and increased

levels of life satisfaction, sense of flourishing, and emotional regulation. They also hypothesized that improvements in self-concept would positively correlate with stronger feelings of flow and meaningfulness of the songwriting experience. The study followed a non-randomized, quasi-experimental design with repeated measures. There were ten adult participants, all of whom were receiving inpatient treatment for either an acquired brain injury or spinal cord injury at the time of the study. Participants engaged in a 12-session songwriting program which targeted self-concept. Sessions were one hour long and occurred twice weekly. The program required participants and the music therapist to co-create three songs—a song each for exploring past self, present self, and future self—using a narrative songwriting method. Data was collected pre-mid-post-intervention using a battery of measures for therapeutic outcomes—self-concept, flourishing, life satisfaction, emotional regulation, affect, health, and anxiety—and for mechanisms of change—flow and meaningfulness. Results showed that participants' mean self-concept improved across time with a medium effect size. Significant negative correlations were found between improved self-concept and decreased ratings of negative affect, depression, and anxiety, as well as significant positive correlations between self-concept and increased ratings of positive affect, flourishing, and life satisfaction. Ratings of flow did not correlate with changes in self-concept or well-being. Meaningfulness positively correlated with increased negative affect, anxiety, and suppressive emotion regulation. The negative correlation between meaningfulness and increased positive affect approached significance. These results indicate that songwriting can strengthen positive aspects self-concept. The authors posit that the correlative relationships found between meaningfulness of the songwriting process and ratings of anxiety, negative affect, and emotion regulation suggest that therapeutic songwriting enabled participants to confront painful

emotions and beliefs about the self that were previously suppressed. They go on to state that this can lead to positive therapeutic outcomes when the process is facilitated by a music therapist.

In addition to providing a rationale for choosing songwriting to address student self-awareness, the literature on therapeutic songwriting informed the present method by exemplifying the clinical considerations that guide the creation and implementation of various songwriting methods.

Songwriting as a Tool for Music Therapy Students

The method presented in this thesis was also heavily influenced by existing literature about the incorporation of songwriting methods into music therapy education and training. Baker & Krout (2011, 2012) have been at the forefront of this research. In their first study on the topic, Baker and Krout (2011) introduced the peer-collaborative songwriting method and explored its effects on music therapy students' self-reflection. The research was guided by the questions, what challenging and positive experiences do students express in collaborative songwriting? Also, how do themes emerging from songwriting differ from themes emerged from student interviews and written reflections found in previous literature? A convenience sample of four participants engaged in two songwriting sessions with two separate dyad pairings, writing one song in each session. They were instructed to write one song about the positive experiences of training and one song about the challenging experiences of training with each partner. The song lyrics were analyzed using thematic analysis, as were students' written reflections on their songs and written reflections from both authors on all included songs. The analysis generated 26 categories of student experiences which were organized under 5 main themes: knowledge, fears, connecting with clients, personal growth, and sharing of positive experiences. Personal growth was the most frequent theme, coded 49 times in thematic analysis. The authors found that

collaborative peer songwriting did increase student self-reflection. Findings suggested participants gained a richer understanding of music therapy and how to learn from their clients. This theme did not appear in previous literature studying student self-reflection, implying that songwriting uniquely facilitated these outcomes.

Baker and Krout (2012) followed this study by researching student's perceived personal and professional growth gained from the peer collaborative songwriting method. The authors sought to identify what students learned about the songwriting process, what professional skills were enhanced by collaborative songwriting, and what areas of personal growth were fostered through this process. A convenience sample of 21 participants completed two peer collaborative songwriting sessions—one at the beginning of the semester and one at the end. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the song lyrics, as well as students' written reflections about their songs and responses to an open-ended questionnaire about the experience. The results showed four themes; collaborative songwriting 1) is an effective tool to express challenges during music therapy training, 2) contributes to personal growth, 3) contributes to knowledge about therapeutic songwriting, and 4) contributes to professional development. The authors found that collaborative songwriting increased participants' awareness of their personality and of their strengths and weaknesses. Further, findings indicated that students gained an understanding of how these personal factors influence the therapeutic process.

Later, Viega & Baker (2019) published a chapter about the use of songwriting in academic supervision to support clinical identity formation. The authors posit that songwriting supports the personal, professional, and musical selves. This is then demonstrated through songs and corresponding reflections written by graduate music therapy students completing their academic supervision seminar. The authors draw implications from these examples, stating that

songwriting helped each student integrate their personal self with their growing professional identity. They propose that this integration process empowered students by heightening their awareness of their inner resources and innate musicality. Lastly, they suggest the process also improved the supervisory relationship between the student and their supervising professor by allowing students to creatively express their needs for further professional growth.

Professionals and students from related fields have also studied songwriting's effects. Over a 25-year timespan, Fox (2018) studied the experience of songwriting as a creative healing process. The guiding question was simply, what is the experience of songwriting? The author explored this question using a heuristic, arts-based approach. The research was grounded in neo-Jungian theory, especially James Hillman's theory of provocative writing. Data was generated as the author participated in her chosen method—an iterative process in which she engaged in songwriting and visual art making while repeatedly examining preceding qualitative data for common themes, thus leading to more artistic engagement. The author did not designate times to write songs or create visual art. Instead, she let the images emerge to her on their own. The results were presented through 12 songs and five visual art pieces. The author found that songwriting heightened her awareness of unconscious material while simultaneously providing a medium to nonjudgmentally reflect on this material. Additionally, she posits that encountering and embracing her own shadow material in the songwriting process improved her ability to be a container for the material clients bring to therapy. From her findings, Fox developed guidelines for accessing the natural emergence of songs and images with clients. These guidelines were integrated into the method developed in this thesis.

Turner (2017), a community musician, engaged in a songwriting method to encapsulate and integrate her doctoral learning experience. The research sought to explore how the multiple

aspects of her identity shape her community music practice and how this enables her to practice with reflexivity. The author used an auto-ethnographic, arts-based approach to address these guiding questions. The method consisted of writing songs to reflect on the author's academic community music experiences. The songs created through this research were presented at a culminating performance which consisted of storytelling, the author performing with the audience, and the author performing for the audience. Results were provided in the form of a video excerpt of the research performance which included two songs and one story. Through writing and performing original songs in response to memories from professional experience, the author found that she could engage in reflexivity with more nuance and honesty. Notably, the author became more aware of her personal responses to sociopolitical events and how this informed her practice.

This research provides preliminary evidence that songwriting can be of great value when used in music therapy training. However, the direct perspective of music therapy students is distinctly missing from this body of literature, as their experiences are analyzed and reported from the researcher perspective.

Method

Design

This thesis uses a humanistic heuristic inquiry design as explained by Sultan (2020). Accordingly, the processes used in this research were identifying with the focus of inquiry, self-dialogue, tacit knowing, intuition, indwelling, focusing, and internal frame of reference. The phases of this research were initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication,

and creative synthesis. As delineated in this design, these phases were passed through fluidly, sometimes with more than one phase occurring simultaneously (Sultan, 2020).

Participants

I was both the researcher and the participant in this research. Due to the nature of this research, it was important to disclose and consider aspects of my intersectional identity, including information about my personal self, student self, and musician self. I am a 25-year-old cisgender female. I am white with mixed European descent. I am bisexual. I was raised in and currently live in a middle-income household. I am able bodied and have chronicle struggles with mental illnesses.

At the time this research was conducted, I was completing my final year of a master's program in music therapy and mental health counseling at Lesley University. I was also completing my second clinical training placement at a children's post-acute rehabilitation hospital. At this placement I worked with children and young adults with medical and mental health diagnosis in an inpatient and outpatient level of care. Before studying at a master's level, I studied music and the interdisciplinary study of music and psychology at the bachelor's level. While obtaining my bachelor's degrees I received formal education in songwriting. I have considered myself a songwriter as I have engaged in this artform throughout my life, beginning at a very young age.

Procedure

The method was a two-phase, cyclical process which combined songwriting, written reflection, and song sharing. A diagram of the method is presented in Figure 1. The cycle began with phase one—a two-week period allotted for writing one song and one reflection about the

song. The songwriting process in this phase was structured by the first three of Fox's (2018) guidelines on accessing "The Giver of Song"—her term for the mysterious felt sense that precedes and inspires the creation of a song. These guidelines are 1) make time, 2) establish and honor the right conditions, and 3) set aside "Ego" and surrender to the song (Fox, 2018). In accordance with these guidelines, I did not schedule a time for songwriting during the allotted weeks. Instead, I waited for a natural impulse to write. Additionally, this research was conducted from the belief that a music therapist's personal self influences their professional self (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Camilleri, 2001; Fox, 2018; Orkibi, 2012, 2013; Turner, 2017; Viega & Baker, 2019). Therefore, I did not require myself to write a song that directly related to my clinical training. Rather, I required myself to consider how my song and training experiences were connected through the written reflection. This was facilitated through guiding questions to be addressed in the reflection: 1) What does this song mean to you? 2) What did you learn about yourself from writing this song?, and 3) How may this relate to your clinical experiences?

The second phase was a one-week period allotted for sharing my song with my on-site clinical supervisor and writing a reflection about the experience of song sharing. This phase incorporated Fox's (2018) final guideline—share the creative products—into the method. In this phase, I shared my song with my supervisor during our weekly supervision meeting. After song sharing, I wrote a reflection guided by the questions, 1) Did you gain any new insights after sharing the song? and 2) What was your experience of sharing the song? Existing literature implies that sharing the process and/or product of songwriting allows individuals to gain new insight and elaborate on previous insight (Baker, 2015; Baker et al., 2015; Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Baker & Wigram, 2005; Fox, 2018; Turner, 2017). However, it is beyond the scope of this

thesis to investigate and define supervision techniques that are optimal for use with this songwriting method.

Figure 1

Diagram of Songwriting Method
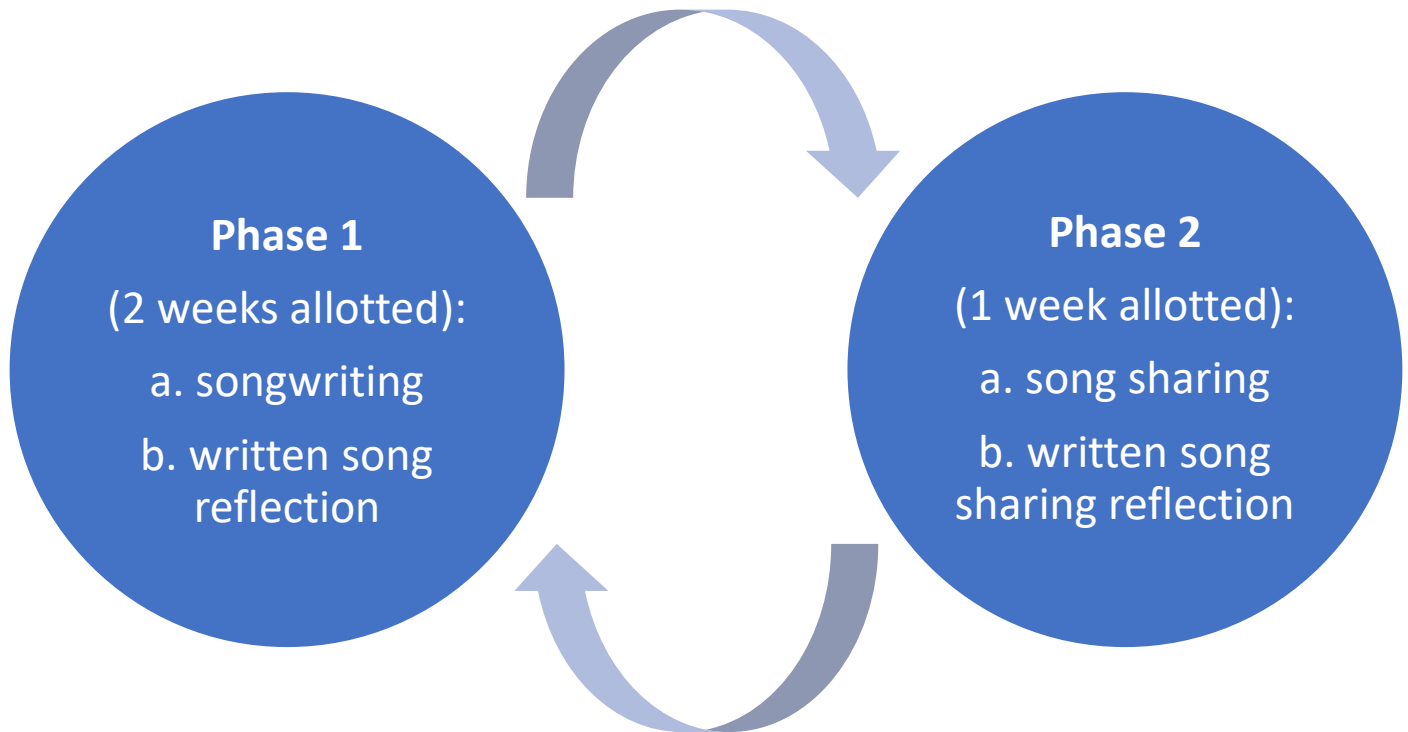
The song lyrics were recorded in a Microsoft Word document. The two reflections were also recorded in a Microsoft Word document. The song was documented as audio recording using the Soundtrap software. This recording is accessible through the link in Appendix A.

Data Analysis

The three segments of raw data were analyzed in the order they were completed during the procedure. The song was analyzed using musical microanalysis (Fleetwood, 2010; Zarate, 2022). In this procedure, I first created an audio recording of the song. Recording was completed

during data analysis rather than data collection. This choice was made to support my re-immersion into the musical material and experience. I listened to the recording openly and noted any thoughts, feelings, or memories that the song evoked in a Microsoft Word document. I extrapolated specific moments of interest by listening to the recording a second time and noting the timestamp at which it occurred. The moments of interest were analyzed according to artistic features, psychological environment, and sociocultural considerations. At this stage, the moments of interest were listened to repeatedly to ensure thorough analysis. Data from this stage was recorded in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Thomas'(2006) general approach to inductive analysis was then conducted on the microanalysis data to generate meaning units and themes.

The written reflections were analyzed one at a time using general inductive analysis (Thomas, 2006). First, I read each reflection openly and highlighted important words and phrases using Microsoft Word. These words and phrases were transferred into a separate Word document and analyzed for significant themes. I then reread the original document to identify all possible data that corresponded with the identified themes. Each theme was assigned a color and data was color coded according to its corresponding theme. Once themes were extracted from all three pieces of raw data individually, they were compared to determine common themes present throughout all data. These themes were then organized into categories.

Results

My inductive analysis yielded 7 themes which were organized into two categories as displayed in Table 1.

Table 1

Categories and Themes Found in Data Analysis

Category	Theme
Song as a Self-Created Container	Voice as an Expressive-Explorative Metaphor
	Lyric as an Expressive-Explorative Metaphor
	Musical Devices as an Expressive-Explorative Metaphor
	Accessing Supervisory Support
Areas of Increased Self-Awareness	Reflecting On and Integrating Theory
	Personal Emotions Effecting Professional Self
	Goals for Continued Professional Development

The category Song as a Self-Created Container encompassed themes that explicated essential elements in the process and product of songwriting that allowed me to create a contained, musical space in which I could reflect on thoughts and feelings. In this category, the term "expressive-explorative metaphor" was used to refer to musical elements that allowed me to simultaneously *express* a specific internal experience while also *exploring* what that experience means to me, personally and professionally. Table 2 provides descriptions and examples for each theme in this category. The category Areas of Increased Self-Awareness encompassed themes related to insights gained through and expressed within the method. Table 3 provides descriptions and examples of each theme in this category.

Table 2:

Themes from the Category "Song as a Self-Created Container"

Theme	Description	Example
Voice as an Expressive-Explorative Metaphor	Instances in which my voice and vocal tamber were used to express a specific thought or feeling *or* lead to the awareness of a specific thought or feeling	"Shift in vocal tamber may be to establish some matter-of-fact-ness. Also to convey the rigidity that I have been imposing on myself while learning who I am as a clinician."
Lyric as an Expressive-Explorative Metaphor	Instances in which lyrics and the process of creating lyrics were used to express a specific thought or feeling *or* lead to the awareness of a specific thought or feeling	"First lyric is a question that isn't answered, feels like song is a way to consider questions related to my feelings on clinical work without the pressure of having to immediately seek an answer"
Musical Devices as Expressive-Explorative Metaphor	Instances in which the composition, arrangement, and performance of the song expressed a specific thought or feeling *or* lead to the awareness of a specific thought or feeling	"Felt like something new was needed to end song instead of continuing in loop, could be musical metaphor for process I hoped to continue in clinical work after this exercise in self-reflection."
Accessing Supervisory Support	Elements of the songwriting method that facilitated effective utilization of the supervisory supports available to me	"As we talked about my fear of being perceived as a selfish music therapist, or as a music therapist that cares for themselves instead of the client, she offered many encouraging remarks. She confirmed that I'm doing good work with my patients. She also validated that this sort of paralyzing overthinking is not unusual for students and new clinicians. It felt really good hear that from her."

Table 3:

Themes from the Category "Areas of Increased Self-Awareness"

Theme	Description	Example
Reflecting On and Integrating Theory	Insights about my theoretical orientation and how to effectively incorporate it into my clinical practice	"First of all, as someone who embraces existential-humanistic theories, being an authentic and empathetic presence to my patients should be a foundational aspect of my practice."
Personal Emotions Effecting Professional Self	Insights about private emotional experiences that effect my professional identity and practice	"I think the automatic-ness of that line helped me realize that I'm not so much afraid of taking the lead as much as I am afraid to take up space during sessions, to assert myself in any way."
Goals for Continued Professional Development	Areas of practice, identified through this songwriting process, that I would like to improve	"I want to stop removing myself from the therapy process, which I 100% have been doing. Enough of that. It's not good for me or the patients. Enough."

Discussion

In this thesis, a songwriting method was created with the intended use of fostering music therapy students' self-awareness. Through heuristic self-inquiry, musical microanalysis, and inductive analysis, I used the method to gather data about the experience and outcomes that this method may yield. The results were a detailed, first-hand student account on the use of this method. It was found that the present songwriting method did allow me to meaningfully engage with self-awareness. This aligns with findings from previous studies (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Fox, 2018; Turner, 2017; Viega & Baker, 2019) and other literature (Viega & Baker, 2019) which also found various songwriting methods to foster self-awareness.

A prominent finding in this research was that the process and product of songwriting allowed me to create a musical container in which self-reflection could effectively take place. Songwriting uniquely facilitated this by providing multiple musical elements—namely lyric, voice and vocal tamber, and musical devices such as form, phrasing, and dynamics—that I could use to express and explore my thoughts and feelings. Particularly, I found that I could use voice and musical devices to either emphasize or alter the intended meaning(s) of a lyric. Utilizing one element in isolation would have greatly diminished the positive impact I experienced while undergoing this method. This suggests that all aspects of the songwriting process work in tandem to create the musical container. Previous studies similarly found that songwriting allowed for students and professionals to express that which they did not feel comfortable conveying verbally. However, these studies focused their data analysis solely on lyrics generated through their method, thus leaving other inherent aspects of songwriting unexamined (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Fox, 2018). Interestingly, despite this difference in methodologies, some distinct uses of lyric were present in both my song and the songs from past studies—specifically the use of expressive-explorative metaphor (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Fox, 2018) and the asking of questions through lyric (Baker & Krout, 2011). The effect of combining lyric and music is addressed in more depth within texts on therapeutic songwriting (Baker, 2015; Baker & Wigram, 2005). This indicates that the body of knowledge on therapeutic songwriting is relevant to the use of songwriting as a music therapy training tool.

The song as a self-created container was foundational to the areas of increased self-awareness found in the present research. I was able to reflect on my theoretical orientations and whether my clinical practice has been effectively guided by them. The present method made me aware of several aspects of my practice that do not align with my theoretical orientations. I was

also able to recognize environmental and cultural influences at my internship site that have contributed to this disconnect. Fox (2018) also found that songwriting helped her gain better understanding of her theoretical approach to practice. Contrastingly, rather than helping her solidify and integrate theoretical frameworks, she reported that songwriting initiated a parallel process in which her research experience later helped her guide clients through a similar multimodal songwriting process. I posit that this distinction is likely due to the difference in professional identity development between Fox and I—she has many years of experience in her field while I am still a student. As a graduate level music therapy student, I found the present songwriting method provided developmentally appropriate support for theory integration.

I also found that this songwriting method enhanced my awareness of how my personal emotions have been shaping my clinical practice. Before beginning this research, I was already aware of the mutual influence that my personal and professional selves have on each other. Even so, this method led to the recognition of several specific manifestations of this influence. For instance, I've known for some time now that I struggle to feel comfortable when purposefully taking up space in social situations. I did *not* know that this was significantly contributing the professional issue which I explored in songwriting—the avoidance of directiveness while working with patients. This awareness directly stemmed from my experience of the present method. Additionally, this awareness has initiated a more intentional focus on this issue as I continue my clinical training. Similar outcomes were reported by all previously mentioned studies investigating songwriting's effects on self-awareness (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Fox, 2018; Turner, 2017). The existing research and this thesis contain significant diversity in research methodology, songwriting methods, and populations studied. Therefore, it is implied

that this outcome can be gained while engaging in various forms of songwriting and is not unique to any one method.

By increasing my self-awareness, I found that the present songwriting method also facilitated meaningful engagement with professional identity development. The process illuminated several personal values, such as authenticity, that I feel are necessary to synthesize into my practice. Not only did I gain a better understanding of the musical therapist I aspire to be, but the process also allowed me to evaluate if my current approach to practice aligns with that aspirational identity. This resulted in the identification of goals and ways of being I want to strive for as I continue the lifelong process of professional identity development. Similar findings are reported in literature on songwriting for self-awareness with both students (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2012; Turner, 2017; Viega & Baker, 2019), and professionals (Fox, 2018). These studies assured that the songwriting method used met the needs of the population being studied. Still, Fox's (2018) guidelines for songwriting, developed from her research, were instrumental in the development of the present method. Despite the notable differences between the participants in her research and mine, Fox's (2018) guidelines for songwriting were effective in both studies. It is not possible to draw definitive conclusions from this observation until further research is conducted. However, it does suggest that the present songwriting method may be particularly versatile because it utilizes research findings that have been evidenced to foster self-awareness in both student and non-student populations.

Lastly, I found that sharing my song with my internship supervisor greatly contributed to the awareness I gained from this method. Doing so allowed me to express intense emotional experiences from clinical training that I previously avoided broaching in purely verbal formats of supervision. Existing literature on songwriting and self-awareness also reported that sharing the

songwriting process and/or product with another was essential to the self-awareness gained from each respective method (Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011; Fox, 2018; Turner, 2017; Viega & Baker, 2019). However, all of these studies required participants to share the process and/or product within different relational contexts—with student peers (F. Baker & Krout, 2012, 2011), an arts-based research group (Fox, 2018), an academic seminar professor (Viega & Baker, 2019), an audience (Turner, 2017), or an on-site internship supervisor (present research). This implies that the act of sharing itself may be more important to fostering self-awareness than who exactly the process or product is shared with.

Clinical Implications and Considerations

The findings of this research accurately reflect the overwhelmingly positive experience I had while using this cyclical, two-phase songwriting method. The processes within this method successfully fostered my self-awareness. The structure of the method itself allowed me to integrate a creative, self-reflective practice into my clinical work. Through utilizing both songwriting and reflective writing, the insights unfolded in an iterative manner. Thus, I was able to consider the same material at different points of time and through different modalities. Overall, the findings from this research imply that the method could be a beneficial tool to support music therapy students in creating a practice of consistent and meaningful engagement with self-awareness. Since capacity for self-awareness is the basis for several other therapeutic skills (Camilleri, 2001) this method may also contribute to student's professional identity development and general clinical training. Furthermore, it may also be a tool for music therapy supervisors to gain understanding of their supervisee's experience of training, as well as integrate music into the supervisory relationship.

Limitations

This research uses a heuristic design and includes only one participant. The design also generated data that was inherently influenced by my intersectional identity, further limiting the results. Accordingly, the results cannot be directly generalized to large populations. Due to the time restraints imposed on this research, this thesis only analyzed data gathered from one completion of this method's cycle. Thus, these findings may not apply to the experience of repeated, consecutive use of the method. Also, during phase two of the method, I was able to share my song with a music therapy supervisor who understood the benefits of songwriting and enthusiastically participated in the process. However, not all music therapy students and professionals have access to a supervisor from the same discipline. Further, it was beyond the scope of this research to examine my supervisor's theoretical approach to supervising and its effects on the method. I found this method to be developmentally appropriate for my needs as a graduate level music therapy student.

The method itself also has limitations which were discovered through this research. Primarily, the method entails a highly structured approach to songwriting which occasionally felt restrictive. While individuals with little to no experience with songwriting may find the structure helpful, those with songwriting experience—and thus a stronger attunement to the felt sense that precedes and inspires the creation of a song (Fox, 2018)—may desire a more flexible adaptation of the present method. Additionally, neither phase in the original method instructed the user to create an audio recording. In this research, I created an audio recording of the song to allow for data analysis. However, this aspect of the research process was just as enlightening as the method itself.
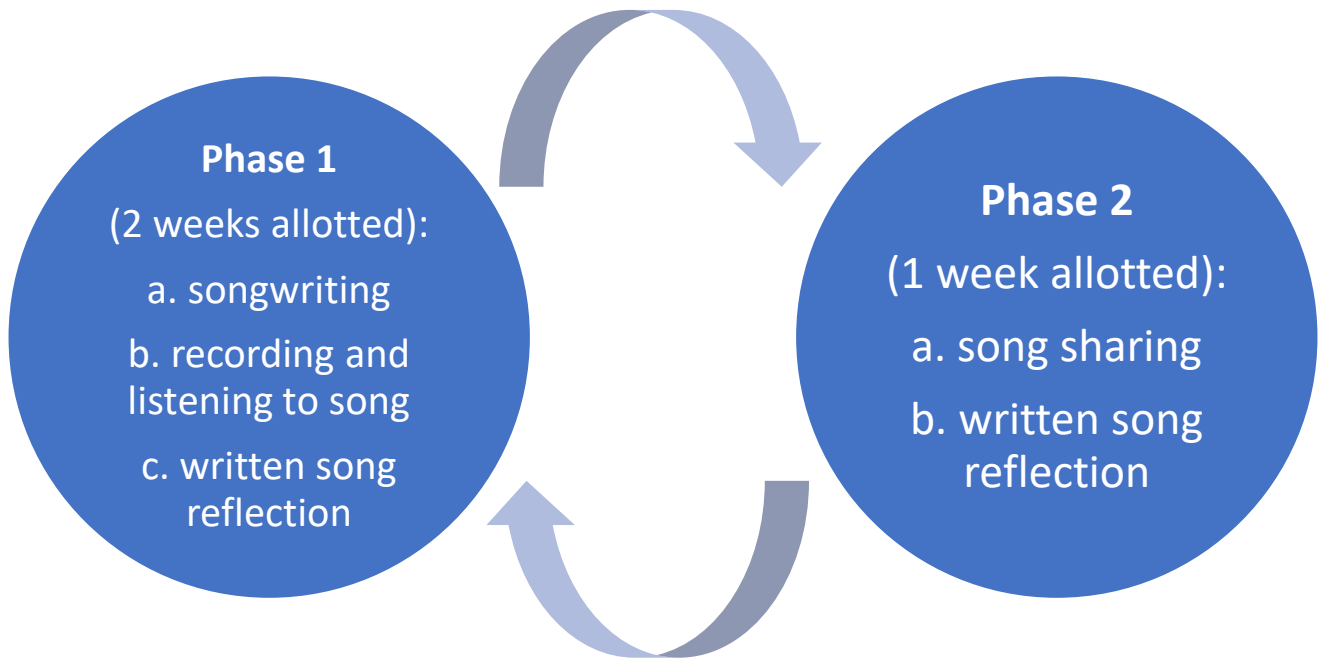
Directions for Future Research

This method should be researched with a larger, more diverse population to learn if the findings in this thesis could become generalizable. In particular, the method should be tested with music therapy student and professionals at different stages of professional development. Future research should also investigate data from participants who engaged in multiple completions of the method's cycle in order to assess how this effects the experience and effectiveness of the method. Supervision is central to the completion of this method. Therefore, future research should also investigate which approaches to supervision are optimal for use with the method. This research should include a comparison between using professional, academic, or peer supervision to reveal if this has a significant impact on the method's outcomes.

To address limitations discovered in the method itself, an adjustment should be made for future research and use. The method should include the creation of an audio recording. Based on the present research, this author suggests a revised method which instructs the user to record the song during phase one, then listen to the recording at least once before completing the written reflection. A diagram of this revised method is presented in Figure 2.

Figure 2

Suggested Revision of Songwriting Method

Phase 1
(2 weeks allotted):
a. songwriting
b. recording and listening to song
c. written song reflection

Phase 2
(1 week allotted):
a. song sharing
b. written song reflection

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Appendix A

Link to Audio Record of *The Reins*

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1uPakiVyrYwRNnaPWEKxMUZPBuSiTFftS/view?usp=sharing

THESIS APPROVAL FORM

Lesley University

Graduate School of Arts & Social Sciences

Expressive Therapies Division

Master of Arts in Clinical Mental Health Counseling: Music Therapy, MA

Student's Name: _Emily Damore

Type of Project: Thesis

Title:____ Fostering Self-Awareness Through Songwriting: Development and Heuristic Self-Inquiry of a Method for Graduate Music Therapy Students

Date of Graduation*: May 21ˢᵗ 2022*

In the judgment of the following signatory this thesis meets the academic standards that have been established for the above degree.

Thesis Advisor*: Dr. Rebecca Zarate*