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A CLOSER EXPLORATION OF THERAPEUTIC RELATIONSHIP THROUGH A MUSICAL MEDIUM: AN ARTS-BASED RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT

Arts-based research is emerging and becoming prominent in music therapy. The intention of this arts-based research study was to explore, experience, and gain awareness of the therapeutic relationship of a client and therapist engaged in music therapy through client and therapist journals. This study examined several elements of artistic expression of music therapy, such as the aesthetic components of verbal journaling and musical portraits. The journals were mixed to create songs that illuminated the therapeutic relationship between client and therapist. The relationship between words and music were analyzed aesthetically to explore the congruence and conflict between the harmony and the lyrics of these song creations. As a result, two songs emerged: *There's a Difference* and *Not by Yourself*. Detailed musical and lyrical analyses are included to illustrate both client and therapist process and reflection of improvisational music therapy sessions. Gaining a deeper understanding of client experiences in music therapy can offer a need for future arts-based research studies wherein music is the artistic medium.

These songs can be engaged with at:

<https://soundcloud.com/michael-kelliher-10539286>

INTRODUCTION

Personal Context of the Researcher

I have always been fascinated by how artists can create songs, which I understand as words that are emotionally amplified through melody, rhythm, harmony, etc. When I began learning guitar around age 12, I constantly brought new songs to my guitar teacher, wanting to understand the chords. Gradually my musical taste widened through experiences of learning guitar as well as being a part of bands and ensembles. After exploring jazz music in my lessons and joining the high school jazz band, I became captivated by song structure and the relationship between harmony and lyrics in

expressing emotional content. Over time, I found it impossible to separate the melody and harmony from the lyrics, for each relied upon the other.

Music was the beginning of many life-long friendships and relationships since I was in junior high school. It was through music that I became a more social, motivated, and empathic person. In short, music as a relational element in my life was the impetus for my interest in the field of music therapy.

After an invitation from a friend, I started singing a capella music, specifically choral and barbershop harmony. The relationship between the music and lyrics is inseparable because the quality of the song's arrangement was contingent on how emotionally connected these two elements were. Later I began to arrange music for leisure, collegiate course requirements, and pay. My "best" arrangements were the ones in which the musical elements enhanced the lyrical content. The idea is to find the lyrical message: how it is embedded into the song and how you can amplify that message through the music for a profound experience of the music and words.

These experiences have informed this current study wherein my relationship to art and artistic processes informs my creative worldview.

Professional Context of the Researcher

I completed Level 1 Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapy training at Molloy College. During this training, I was finding ways that music-centered music therapy began to inform my clinical style and perspective. These principles shaped how I treated the various clients I worked with, and how I made meaning of growth in music therapy.

This is an arts-based research (ABR) study that examined the therapeutic relationship with a client during improvisational music therapy. This study involved gathering recorded verbal journals from the client and recorded music journals from the therapist over two sessions. Song creation, wherein words and music were edited together, was the arts-based medium through which the journals were engaged with and analyzed by. Attending arts-based research presentations has shaped my interest in a topic of arts-based research (ABR). In specific, when Dr. Michael Viega came to Molloy to give an overview of ABR, I began thinking that this way of doing research could allow me to explore relationships in therapy in a way in which music was the medium. After attending additional arts-based presentations, I wanted to engage in ABR to examine the client-therapist relationship through an arts-based means through the musical medium of song creation. I was encouraged by the idea that music can represent lived experience, which ultimately seemed less removed from the social phenomenon of music therapy.

Recently I reflected on a case example wherein Yalom (Yalom & Elkin, 1974) was curious about a client's most honest thoughts about her psychotherapy sessions. He asked this woman to journal during every session, describing what she was most affected by, her thoughts about the session, and her feelings towards him. Yalom kept clinical session notes, documenting his own personal disclosure and countertransference. After terminating their therapy together, they exchanged these notes. Yalom predicted he would be reading about interventions or techniques implemented in the session, yet this client focused on their relationship. For example, such commented on her admiration of

his ability to listen without judgement or how he positively commented on her appearance. She wrote how she did not have relationships like these any more in her life. He was surprised that she wrote most about the very vehicle he relies on in therapy: relationship.

I wished to explore therapeutic relationship with one of my clients with whom I experienced strong countertransference feelings. I was interested in examining the client-therapist relationship by (a) collecting a client's verbal/vocal response to music therapy subsequent to the session and (b) journaling my feelings and impressions of a session musically. I wished to create an improvised musical portrait of my own experience as a therapist to process the session. My thoughts were to discover unique findings through creating a compelling whole of mixing our journals together. Similar to how Yalom's mixing of journals became a book, the mixing of these journals became songs.

ABR is emerging in the field of music therapy, and there are studies that have implemented an ABR method during any portion of the research – collecting data or displaying results for example. Researchers are always trying to come closer to the individual lived experience within phenomenological research. I believe that through the medium in which they experience therapy allows for a closer representation of lived experience and could provide further insight from client's perspective. I would hope that a study like this could open more avenues for examining lived experience through the same medium as the therapy.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Arts-Based Research

Arts-Based Research (ABR) is a developing research methodology that is helping to move research closer to articulating the lived experiences of clients as well as examining self-process in clinicians through the arts (Beer 2005). Because of its newness to the field of psychology and creative arts, the literature is not expansive and much of the research is not recent (Austin & Forinash, 2005). In the past 10 years, there has been a growing body of literature in ABR across a number of disciplines, such as visual arts (Faulkner, et al., 2016), social work (Gerstenblatt, 2013), and education (Mullen, 2016). Researchers have also begun to consider the possibilities of bridging qualitative practice and artistic activities. The arts have been incorporated into research design of creative arts disciplines such as art, music, dance, drama, etc. (Finley 2008; Forinash 2016; McNiff, 1998). The challenge in making a clear distinction between arts-based research as a methodology and arts as a method in a study is gradually becoming clearer due to recent literature. Austin & Forinash (2005) say “the arts are primary to the research process” (p. 459). In an expansion of this definition, and to give distinction between arts-based methods in research, and an arts-based methodology, Viega & Forinash (2016) state that

arts-based research is an umbrella term that includes the use of arts as a research method—where the art forms are primary in the research

process—and as an overall methodology—where a creative worldview forms the philosophical foundation for an inquiry. (p. 917)

The arts can be incorporated into the research in formulating research questions, informing your method, analyzing data, and, within arts-based methodology, inform your creative worldview as to how you wish to obtain a deeper level of knowing and experiencing (Barone & Eisner, 2012). A vital quality of arts-based research is that its underlying intent is not to find a single truth. Barone & Eisner distinguish the role of ABR as a means of interpretivism:

Thus, the contribution of arts based research is not that it leads to claims in propositional form about states of affairs but that it addresses complex and often subtle interactions and that it provides an image of those interactions in ways that make them noticeable. In a sense, arts based research is a heuristic through which we deepen and make more complex our understanding of some aspect of the world. (p. 3)

Arts-Based Research in Music Therapy

ABR is a developing avenue of scholarly inquiry in music therapy. Music therapy researchers are including the medium of music as well as other arts, such as poetry, movement, and visual art (Edwards, 2015; Kondo, 2003; McCaffrey & Edwards, 2015; Seabrook, 2007; Vaillancourt, 2009; York, 2006). Where and when the implementation of art takes place in the research process is vital and at the discretion of the researcher. However, arts-based inquiry at any stage of the research may allow the artist to connect to and understand the research at a greater depth and come closer to lived experience.

ABR typically aims to remain as close to an artistic medium as possible when illustrating, or performing results. In some cases, in addition to the scholarly writing of the research, the study can be performed for an audience for a greater and wider understanding of the experience. Austin (1997) conducted ABR to portray the story of four individuals in Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). Gradually, the researcher included herself as a participant because her own personal feelings were yielding information. She processed through poetry composition which evolved into a musical theater play that she wrote and composed. The data were collected through interviews with the four participants in a semi-structured interview to learn more about their experiences in AA. Austin engaged in the arts to then process her own feelings and responses to the interviews, capturing the personal emotional qualities to the study. The poetry later guided her to song composition to portray the salient information from the interviews. The outcome of the study was in the performance of this theatrical piece. There were several performances, some of which warranted new song material for accurate description of a character's development (Austin, 2015). The audience was encouraged to individually experience and interpret the arts-based performance, as each response was vital to the original research focus on people's responses to a client experience in therapy. Austin's study has many forms of results due to the performative nature, so no two performances are alike.

Also to be experienced as performance, Kenny's arts-based research (2015) explored her development as a music therapist in 12 relationships. She reflected on relationships with 12 other music therapists that played a role in shaping her professional and philosophical identity. Kenny reflected on information processing salient moments in each relationship. These relationships were each given a duet composed through performing theory, a term which lacks a central definition, but is a creative arts-based inquiry in Kenny's writing process. Performative theory is an avant-garde practice which allows the performer to set up their own parameters and meaning for performance (Schechner, 1985; Turner, 1988). The duets were composed while listening to Philip Glass' soundtrack to *The Secret Agent*, and in response to not only her personal relationships with each therapist but her relationship with their theoretical writings in *Readings on Music Therapy Theory* (Bruscia, 2012). Kenny reflects with ranging emotions and thoughts: agreement, disagreement, joy, wonder, and gratitude. The results are subjective emotional responses from Kenny, which supports the need for heuristic inquiry in a creative world view. Through the artistic medium of writing poetry and setting it to music, Kenny deepens her experience of her connection with those who have impacted her.

ABR serves as a useful methodology in first-person research. Lindvang (2013) conducted a mixed methods study; the arts-based research method of her study involved collecting one improvisation that the student brought in from their self-experiential learning process that they felt was significant. A musical analysis was conducted which reported musical characteristics as well as emotional responses utilizing Hevner's (1936) mood wheel. An "improvisation narrative" was created which utilized a mix of free verse poetry from the researcher in response to the improvisation. This was done for interpretation of music and musical relationship between student experiential learner and music therapist.

Contemporary arts-based research in music therapy is sparse, yet has begun to pave an artistic path towards understanding the experience of therapy, process, and creativity. Viega's dissertation (2013) started with 22 songwriting participants, inner-city youth struggling with various psychological and emotional issues. The youth selected a total of 20 songs to engage with. Viega engaged in several creative arts modalities such as body movement or "body listening," free musical improvisation, mandala drawing, and poetry, and then analyzed each song through musical, lyrical, and score analysis. Viega then engaged in arts-based inquiry of hermeneutic research – body listening, to examine affective-intuitive responses in his body to the music, and musical composition – in response to the 20 songs. Viega was interested in exploring his own experience with the clients' songs and took artistic endeavors to understand his process deeper. Therefore, the body listening allowed for a more profound and embodied experience of the music, which in turn affected his artistic choices in remixing the songs to illuminate his own process in understanding the client's development in music therapy.

The study outcomes are the recontextualized song compositions. The songs were remixed to reflect Viega's experience engaging with the songs and how he perceived the client's experiences. These remixed songs underwent cross-comparison to the original songs, by listening to and examining the qualities of the original song and the remixes song as a way to verify and recheck the initial analysis (Viega, 2013).

A study which stemmed from the original dissertation involved Viega (2016) engaging even further within the arts-based medium to explore his relationship to the client compositions. In this event, he was the only participant, engaging with client-written songs and performing them with improvisational aspects through remixing live in front of an audience. The performance incorporated a full album and followed 3 stages of development for the songwriter which are linked to a metaphorical story of a phoenix rising from the ashes. In this study the data are the 11 songs which form the album and the researcher's narrative metaphorical story. The results are the performance, which can only be experienced, not detailed in writing in this form of ABR. Due to the cyclical and expanding nature of arts-based data, Viega (2017) took his dissertation another step in illuminating client processes through these remixed songs by obtaining the perspective of an audience. The audience evaluated the songs by writing down thoughts and impressions of the performance. This informed the researcher not only about the question of audience perspective of the songs, but also audience perspective of Viega's relationships to the songs.

Viega & Baker (2016) conducted a study to examine and engage with client-composed songs from music therapy with a spinal cord injury. Three songs were written in response to the injury. Song one is about the past self, song two is about the present self, and song three is written about the imagined future self. Both authors engaged with the songs within their own approach: analytical and experiential (ABR). Within the experiential approach, the author was able to gain a "heuristic and embodied understanding of the complexities involved with losing a sense of self and identity..." (p. 11). The arts-based method of engaging with client-composed songs allowed the researcher the opportunity to gain perspective and insight into a neurodisability and how a life-altering injury can be experienced in music. Through the analytical lens, the lyrics were analyzed using a deductive approach, coding lyrical lines as "belonging to one, more than one, or none of the sub domains of the self – personal, social, family, moral, physical, academic" (p. 4). Music was also reviewed to determine if the elements of the music supported or contradicted the lyrics.

Client Experiences in Music Therapy

There are many works written which tell the stories of therapy (Bruscia, 1996; Hadley, 2003; Meadows, 2011). Most of the body of literature emanates from therapist perspective. However, some of the literature tells the story from client perspective, or a third-person perspective, a parent or even an outside researcher (Aigen 1997; Hibben, 1999; Lindenfelser, et al. 2008; Yalom, 1974). Case studies focus on the process of the client in therapy, outlining specific techniques, emerging themes, work towards established goals, and occasionally therapist's personal process. The literature attempts to convey the dynamic detail of therapy in written form.

Few music therapy studies have sought to examine lived experience of the client through phenomenology. Sorel (2004) explored the parent-child dynamic in music therapy sessions. She found that the parent and child were both able to elaborate and discuss their experiences together, with each expressing, at times, differing views about the work. Their process in music therapy was told from several perspectives, from interviews with the therapists, parent, child, and the researcher's analysis. This allowed

for many viewpoints to be highlighted and discussed throughout their time in music therapy, which ultimately gives the reader a profound sense of the parent-child experience in therapy. Aigen (1997) examined the lived experience of four young adults in group music therapy. The perspective is told solely by the researcher, who observed clinical video and analyzed improvised musical themes. Aigen then put together a book and video which involves giving a third-party voice of each member. Aigen speaks from the first-person perspective, embodying the client's lived experience to tell their story of music therapy. Many studies explore lived experience, but not many stories involve the client and therapist's perspective together, and how they may interact through congruence or conflicting ideas.

There is limited literature that explores lived experience through music. However, there are emerging studies that have aimed to understand a client's experience through engaging with their music (Aigen, 1997; Sorel 2004; Turry 2006; Viega, 2013). These studies support further exploration of lived experience through music. Thus, the following research questions inform this study: *How do songs created from reflexive journals reflect the lived experiences of the therapeutic process?*

- a) *What do the compositional harmonic and melodic elements reveal about the therapist's experience?*
- b) *What do the lyrics reveal about the client's lived experience?*
- c) *What does the relationship between music and lyrics reveal about the therapeutic relationship?*

METHOD

Design

This is an Arts-Based Research study, which implements elements of heuristic inquiry to examine the lived experience of a client and therapist engaged in music therapy. I explored therapeutic relationship through the creation of songs based on client/therapist journals. This happened in three steps. First, I asked the participant to record themselves speaking, singing, and/or rapping about their impressions, responses, reactions and feelings after an hour-long music therapy session. I created a musical journal by improvising on an instrument such as guitar or piano – also recording impressions, responses, reactions and feelings after the music therapy session. This type of journaling is defined as musical portrait. Creating a musical portrait is when the “therapist contemplates the feelings and moods expressed and implied by the (client) in a particular session or situation...and then improvises a piece of music that reflects these feelings and moods” (Bruscia, 1998, p. 103).

Second, I engaged with the music journals and noted my affective and intuitive responses, also referred to as body listening (Bonny, 1993). Affective-intuitive qualities are defined as “the inner spaces and responses discovered within oneself that allow archetypal and spiritual insights to arise” (Bonny, 1993, p. 5). This allowed me to connect with the client's journaling through body listening (Bonny, 1993).

Last, I found the most salient parts of each journal, sampled and transcribed these parts, and structurally corroborated the journals to edit them together via music recording software to create a song. The journals held the potential to interact with one another, as I mixed them, in congruence and/or conflict.

Participants

Once the proposal for this study received IRB approval, two participants were chosen for this study: a client and a music therapist. As researcher/therapist, I am one of the primary sources of data. I am a board-certified music therapist who has been working professionally for two years. My clinical work is based in music-centered music therapy with relationship-based influences. To best meet the reasons of the study, which were to explore, experience, and gain awareness of the therapeutic relationship of a client and therapist, purposive selection was used to include a participant whose session brought up feelings of strong countertransference.

Participant profile: Steven. Steven (pseudonym) is a 19-year-old young man who has been a client in music therapy for two years. He has several diagnoses: Persistent Depressive Disorder, Parent-Child Relational Disorder, and a Learning Disability. Steven is a musician who primarily identifies as a guitarist, although he has foundational skills in singing, drums, and piano. Steven is a self-referred client, whose primary intention in seeking out music therapy treatment was for “research about the field.” Steven has presented as shy, emotionally guarded, yet intelligent and naturally intuitive. He verbally expresses himself seldom, yet does so with introspection and thoughtfulness. He has disclosed to have a very disconnected relationship with his family, especially his father, to whom he has attributed much of his emotional trials. The study was explained to Steven, who then gave informed consent.

Materials

In the music therapy session, a wide array of musical instruments was made available: electric guitar, acoustic piano, drum set, electric bass, and various percussion instruments. The room was set up with an overhead camera and two microphones to capture audio/video. To journal, I provided the participant with a voice recorder. I videotaped my improvisational music journal with the same video equipment that the music therapy sessions at the facility are recorded with.

The use of these recording and notation programs was essential to the approach of conducting arts-based research, in that engaging with music for the intent of creating, or corroborating a musical whole is how this study made meaning. The music journal was analyzed and the salient moments transcribed through a music notation software, MuseScore 2. The structural corroboration of the art, or remixing and thus creation of the song, was done on music recording software, GarageBand.

Setting

The study took place at the Rebecca Center for Music Therapy at Molloy College — where previous sessions were held — in a room large enough for the aforementioned

instruments. The Rebecca Center was chosen in order to maintain consistency of the therapeutic environment. Data collection took place over two weeks, with one one-hour session per week. The recording of verbal journals was left to the discretion of the participant in a place where he felt comfortable disclosing personal feelings.

Procedures

Music therapy. Each session followed a format similar to the ongoing sessions that the therapist and client have been engaged in for the past two years. The method was creative music therapy from the Nordoff-Robbins tradition, utilizing electric as well as acoustic instruments for play. The approach involves the improvisational use of music to evoke responses, develop relationships, and address emotional, cognitive, social, and musical goal areas (Nordoff & Robbins, 2007). The session design was loosely structured to allow for spontaneous interactions to emerge in a client-led manner (Carpente, 2013). The client can initiate verbal ideas as well as musical ideas for interaction between client and therapist. The therapeutic approach was to explore client-led ideas, musically and/or verbally and to engage with those ideas in a reciprocal and interactive manner.

Data Generation

Journaling. As a prerequisite to the study, I asked Steven to journal his responses, reactions and feelings following a 50-minute music therapy session. Steven was asked to journal after every session for two consecutive sessions. Journaling can offer a potentially dynamic experience in self-disclosure (Yalom, 1974). All verbal responses were encouraged through whichever medium Steven chose to express them: free verbal response, poetry, spoken word, rap, or song. This was done in effort to preserve the most efficient, comfortable, and authentic way for him to express his responses and feelings. I asked to be given the audio recording before each following session, which I downloaded onto a password-protected computer.

I also engaged in recording musical improvisations to freely and musically respond/react to sessions. This type of journaling is considered a musical portrait (Bruscia, 1998). This was carried out in a similar manner to the participant's journals: after each session and saved to a password-protected computer. I engaged with the journals once all journals were collected in order to avoid introducing bias into the ongoing therapeutic relationship.

Viega and Forinash (2016) state that "The creative modalities, methods, and tools utilized in collecting and analyzing data should remain embedded within the values that define the design" (p. 926). After each session, Steven was given a voice recorder and asked to vocally express his feelings and impressions of the session. Journal was encouraged to be done in whichever vocal medium Steven preferred, as to replicate the open-ended avenues of processing of the session. When Steven and I met for the following session, I extracted the data from the journal and secured it on a password-protected computer. Similarly, following the session, I recorded my musical response on piano, for session 1, and guitar for session 2, and saved it to the same computer. Each journal was labeled according to which participant it came from and session number to

which it correlates. There are a total of four journals, two journals from Steven and two journals from me, stemming from the same two sessions.

To engage with the musical portraits, I followed a series of steps that were influenced by several sources, including my Nordoff-Robbins and graduate-level training (Figure 1):

1. I listened once through just to hear the portrait in its entirety
2. I listened to examine affective-intuitive qualities (Bonny, 2009)
3. I created an index to notate shorthanded the musical themes (Nordoff & Robbins, 2007)

I musically transcribed the salient themes which illustrated connections to my personal process notes To engage with the verbal journals, I followed a series of steps similar to the engagement of musical portraits, as to keep consistency between the artistic mediums:

1. I listened once through just to hear the journal in its entirety
2. I listened to examine affective-intuitive qualities (Bonny, 2009)
3. I transcribed the journal
4. I made note of several words and phrases to which I had strong affective-intuitive reactions

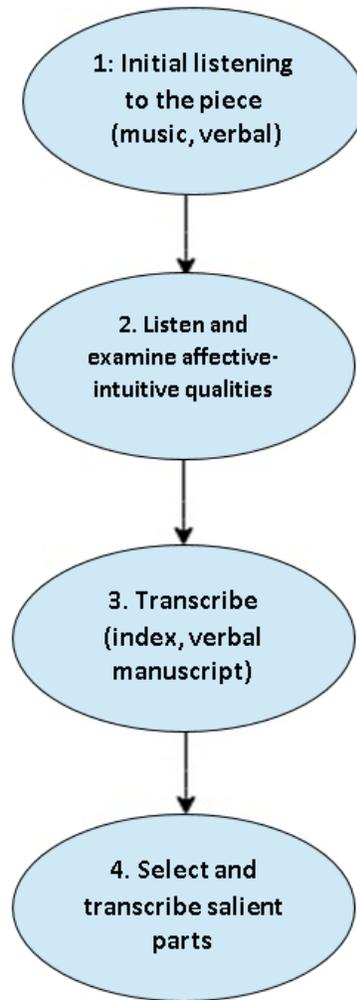


Figure 1: Steps in listening to journals

I then structurally corroborated the journals into one single song per session, which can artistically express lived experience of music therapy from both client and therapist within the same musical structure. Barone & Eisner (2012) discuss that structural corroboration “deepens the conversation...” and “yields an array of questions that will make more complex the analysis that was initially undertaken” (p. 162). My artistic considerations allowed me to make decisions based on aesthetics with which I felt the journals could interact, with potential to become a musical whole. The two media could potentially interact in different ways — either in congruence or in conflict — to emphasize the lived experiences of both client and therapist. The editing/sampling was at my discretion, as I sampled the journals based on emotional/affective-intuitive responses. I kept record of these responses through a journal with shorthand notes. The final corroborated piece of music yielded a song, which I was able to analyze with consideration of the relationship between music and lyrics.

Trustworthiness

After structural corroboration, I played the finished songs to Steven in our music therapy session as a form of member checking. Both songs were played in their entirety and I gave him the manuscripts for the song creation. Steven disclosed that the songs “made sense” and were representative of his process. Playing the songs for him deepened the musical and verbal process in our sessions and allowed for new context of feelings and relationship to surface in sessions.

RESULTS

I present the results in two main sections: 1) themes and summaries of the sessions and 2) songs as aesthetic evidence. The first section describes the session in some detail as well as the findings from the journals. Within each session description are several sub-sections: my initial non-clinical notes, the client’s verbal journal, and the musical portrait.

The initial notes sections are my personal, shorthand notes, sometimes one or two-word phrases, taken after the session and just after creating the musical portrait. This was done each time to deepen my emotional understanding of personal process in the session. The notes are first-person thoughts about my process and not the client’s process. For both my initial notes and the client’s verbal journal entries, I identified themes to reflect the general idea by extracting a few choice words within the notes/journals that seemed salient to me. After reviewing these words, I created a theme based on how the words related.

Themes and Summaries of the Sessions

Session 1. Steven entered the room without speaking and sat at the snare drum and floor tom set up for him at his usual seat in the room. He began a basic beat and I joined on piano. The music reflected the solemn state he was presenting to me, a minor key with small melodic and harmonic development within a moderate dynamic and tempo. Later in the session, I asked Steven if he had any interest in songwriting. We had explored songwriting together in our early stages of music therapy, yet it hasn’t been revisited in over a year. Steven showed little interest in this. Upon a slightly provoking conversation about Steven’s comfort tapping into his full musical reservoir, Steven seemed dismayed at my suggestions of writing a song that incorporated singing. We made improvised music together to end our session, yet the topic of songwriting did not sustain.

My initial notes. The theme from my journaling after this session was *A Struggle*:

Tension. Overreaching. Overextending. Pushing. Why am I tense in this session? Why do I feel something is lacking from me? Am I giving too much? Am I asking too much of my client? What am I pushing for? What am I trying to draw out? Why am I trying to draw something out?

Client journal. The following excerpt is from Steven's verbal journal from session 1. The excerpt is written verbatim and the entire journal is displayed. The theme here was *What I Need*:

Music therapy works a lot differently for me than a conventional talk therapy would. It doesn't force me to talk about what I'm feeling, but I still get the emotion out. I still kind of learn how to cope with it. That's what I've come to learn in like however many years I've been doing it. It's a lot more therapeutic than actual conventional therapy.

The journal reflects what he feels in music therapy altogether, rather than seemingly about the corresponding session. While some part of me thought that this might have been some further resistance to the session, after engaging with the recording several times and jotting down my reactions to the affective qualities and inflections in his voice, I began to realize the genuineness of the content expressed. A word that struck me deeply was *force*, as in "it doesn't force me to talk about what I'm feeling." The hard pronunciation of the 'f' in the word force particularly contained a lot of emphasis. Because of the feelings I had about the session, I did not expect to hear the delicate and sensitive qualities not only in the words, but also in Steven's voice and prosody. I could start to feel a warm energy in my body that prompted me to stretch my limbs. I felt all of my tension from that session and my own portrait changing into release and relaxation. When hearing the word "force", I experienced a feeling of that warm energy spreading throughout my body. The words left me feeling renewed, hopeful, and determined, as I felt Steven's character come through in his journal.

Musical portrait. This musical portrait was composed on an upright piano. The musical portrait started with a repeated and sustained B tone in the middle range of the piano. Gradually, other tones were then placed melodically around the B, such as the minor third and minor second scale degrees, assuming B has been set as the tonal center at this point in the improvisation. The melody is established as B-D-C, first rising to the minor third, then down to the minor second.

As the melody is established and repeated, harmonic structure begins to develop in the left hand. The B-F# open fifth in the left hand gives a feeling of tension against the C melody note. This is where the minor ninth interval establishes the mood of the portrait by creating dissonance and tension. There is resolution when the harmony moves to a C6 chord. The harmony moves between these two chords for some time until introducing a Cm6 chord. In the musical portrait, this chord resolves back to the tonic, releasing tension. This musical portrait conveys moments of tension and gradual release, which I, as the clinician felt during session 1 (Figure 2).

Session 1
Motif 1

Bm(omit3,b9) C6(omit3) Bm(omit3,b9)

8 C6 Cm6 B5

Piano

Pno.

Figure 2: Session 1 musical transcription

Affective-intuitive qualities. When listening back a few weeks later, I was engulfed throughout the portrait in the intensity and tension that it brought. Rhythmically, the portrait felt fluid to me and without tension, while the melodic, harmonic, and textural elements brought feelings of both unsteadiness and determination. The modal elements of the melody recalled an epic Mixolydian theme from a fantasy movie at a point when the characters were in the midst of a long journey. I felt tension in my legs, in a way where my legs wanted to move, or take me somewhere. When the minor sixth chord was played, a feeling of rigidity came over my body and I felt the need to move. In that moment I felt something was lacking from me. I could sense my music reaching out not unlike Tristan calling out for Isolde. I took note on the thoughts of needing to move, tension, and determination.

To summarize, the journals in Session 1 displayed my process and Steven's process as two differing perspectives of therapeutic relationship. I found myself pushing for something in our session together. I found myself questioning my intentions and feeling as though I was overreaching. However, as I experienced Steven's journal, I came to realize the care and sensitivity he felt towards music therapy. This ultimately helped make artistic decisions as to how to create the song.

Session 2. In this session, some important moments to note were the moments of resistance between me and Steven. I played acoustic guitar while Steven played a small set of percussion instruments, snare drum, mini marimba, woodblocks. As our musical improvisation took form into a Spanish-influenced music, I playfully sang to Steven to sing with me. Steven replied with a "no" several times, yet affectively displaying a smile.

As I playfully continued to ask, his “no” became more melodic until he was practically singing for the first time in music therapy with me.

My initial notes. The theme from my journaling after this session was *Together*:

Initially meeting in music. Harmony – synchrony. Feelings of togetherness. Feelings of branching out. Listening – mutuality. Tension – release. Musically challenging Steven. Steven meets me in the challenge, yet has hard time moving freely. Music allows for playfulness of the resistance. Continuity. Honesty. Exposure. Emotional investment and exploration. Openness within emotionality.

Client journal. The following excerpt is from Steven’s spoken journal from session 2. The excerpt is written verbatim and is the entire journal. The theme here was *Feeling Connected*:

It’s weird; every time I walk out of music therapy it makes me a little more introspective...just because of that musical connection. It’s weird playing with more than...not by yourself; two people. I don’t know, it creates a certain chemistry. And then it makes me feel better every time. Less depressed and alone, probably is the right way to word that. So...yeah.

The use of space in Steven’s words instilled a need for me to move my body. This is possibly due to the difference in hearing him speak in the journal and hearing him speak in sessions – there are typically no spaces in his dialoguing in session; he can be quite brief. I took note of my reaction to this difference. I did start to move my body to deepen the body listening.

Musical portrait. This musical portrait was composed on acoustic guitar. The theme of the musical portrait is of a gradual emergence from a musical theme that was prominent in this respective session. The first tones played in succession are F-C-G, each tone rising up a fifth, thus spanning a major ninth. The Fadd9 chord instilled a feeling of openness in the session that I was looking to emulate in the portrait. The chord, which contains two open fifths, feels wide and expanding. The harmonic structure then continues to develop with similar arpeggiated tones as the Fadd9. The harmonic structure gradually becomes Fadd9, A minor7, C major7, E minor7 (Figure 3). The decision to include music based from our session was an intuitive choice because this musical experience was salient in the session. The music acted as a canvas for resistance to emerge, and yet was a container for us to be playful in the resistance.

Session 2

Motif 1

♩ = 120
Let ring Fadd9 Am7 Cmaj7 Em7 *Let ring* full

Figure 3: Session 2 musical transcription

Affective-Intuitive Qualities. The musical portrait begins with a rubato feel and arpeggiated chords with extensions, such as 9ths and 7ths. Immediately I stretched my body to this to align with the feeling of expansion. The deep bass tones of the acoustic guitar filled me with a sense of grounding, putting my body at ease. The subtlety of the three note phrases offered an openness on the sonic space, yet the unique chord structure influenced a feeling of wonder and thoughts of open-endedness.

To summarize, I found a lot of congruence between the journals from Session 2. This allowed the journals to naturally form into song structure. Our experiences in music therapy were closely related, which, to me, called for less remixing of the journals, as they could accurately represent perspectives of music therapy in this session.

Songs as Aesthetic Evidence

Structural corroboration allowed me to put together pieces of evidence to create an artistic whole. I edited, mixed and created songs from my musical portraits and Steven's verbal journals. Pieces of evidence of Steven's and my response to therapy, through different media, are collected, engaged with and artistically put together to create a song (Figure 4). The process of structural corroboration involved four main steps, which happened in a flowing, rather than procedural, manner wherein each step was revisited during the process: (1) mixing & editing, (2) artistic liberties, (3) affective-intuitive qualities, and (4) aesthetic considerations.

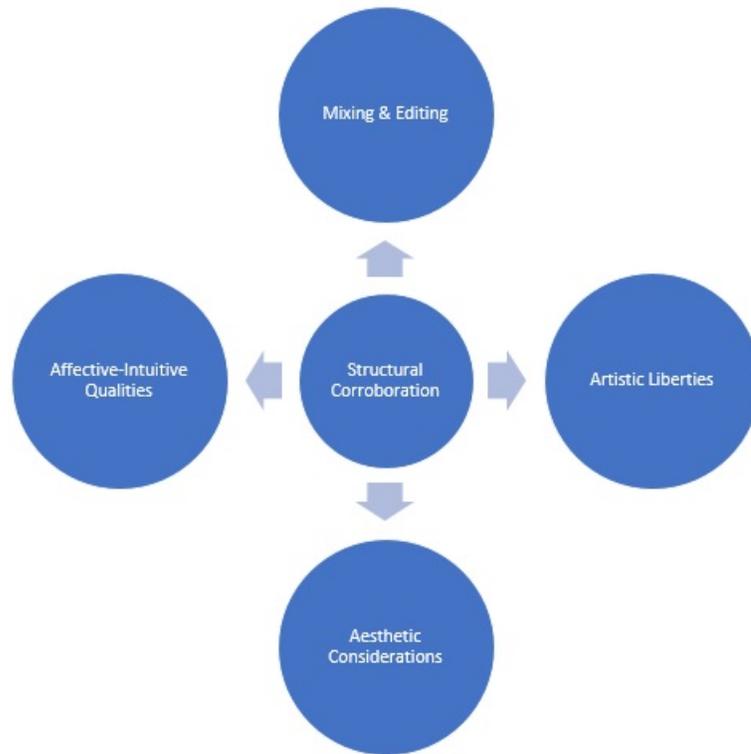


Figure 4: Process of structural corroboration

Songs as aesthetic evidence

Session 1 – There’s a Difference.

The relationship between music and lyrics. Within the song, both Steven’s and my process are illuminated for the listener, and each individual’s process can be complementary to the other. The song opens with “Music therapy works a lot differently...for me...” while the piano comes in softly, under the lyrics, on the sustained B tone. The delicacy of Steven’s words, the space before “...for me” is expanded and reframed with the sustained piano tone. To establish a sonic atmosphere for the delicacy of his words, the B tone is sustained until reaching up to the minor third. The melody B-D-C then begins to take shape as Steven’s words fade, and my process begins to move to the forefront. The word “force” is lined up metrically to fall on the Bm (omit3, b9) chord to give prominence to the idea of ‘pushing’, from my initial notes.

I wanted to emphasize that although Steven’s words described a feeling of freedom from a therapeutic “force,” I was feeling dissatisfied with my clinical interventions when working with Steven’s resistance. Steven’s pronunciation and inflection of the word gives that much more meaning to the dissonant chord. This song represents the dichotomy of the struggling therapist, who is determined to reach the client on a level they may be projecting, and the grateful client, whose attendance in a therapy session means much more to them than the execution of clinical techniques.

Mixing and editing. I took many artistic liberties with sampling and editing both music and words. Within the opening of the song, I applied reverb to the vocals to give further emphasis to the delicacy I heard in his voice. On the words "...for me" I applied an echo effect in relation to the emotional reaction I had to the first line – this part of the sentence felt exposing and raw. At this time, I edited out the latter half of the sentence in order to give further emphasis on how I heard his words. I sampled and looped the initial piano melody to repeat the B-D-C motif under his words "force me," which were also looped. The artistic process included some experimenting with sounds and song form in order to find a fit for an aesthetic whole which could represent both processes in this song (Figure 5). I used compression and adjusted the EQ (equalizers) to manipulate tone and create sharpness to words or music, or a more filtered sound, based on the emotional quality I meant to convey.



Figure 5: Mixing the media

Session 2 – Not by Yourself

The relationship between music and lyrics. This song contains many moments of congruence between music and words. The idea of expansion, openness, and introspection from both the words and music allowed the song to become a whole quite naturally. The opening of the song begins with Steven’s last words in his journal, “so...yeah...” creating a tone which conveys being content with his words, as well as setting the mood of the piece. The motif then begins, offering a supportive palette for phrases of lyrics to emerge, such as “a little more introspective” and “musical connection.” As the motif becomes a strum pattern, utilizing the same harmonic progression, the lyrics reflect on his view of “a certain chemistry.” The motif picks up energy and rhythmically fills up more space by incorporating longer eighth note patterns per chord, as lyrical development leads up to an edited volume swell. Within the space,

Steven's lyrics "*Not by yourself*" are spoken a capella at the climax of the song. The first motif, the arpeggiated 9th and 7th chords, is brought back as a recapitulation as the lyrics. "*Depressed and alone*" are repeated several times. The lyrics "*not by yourself*" are brought back to compliment a polarized theme of the previous line "*depressed and alone*," which Steven has alluded to feeling in his life. The main motif within the harmonic structure, Fadd9, A minor7, C major7, E minor7 is then played in reverse with an effect to close the song.

DISCUSSION

It is useful to revisit the research questions at this point: *How do songs created from reflexive journals reflect the lived experiences of the therapeutic process?*

- a) *What do the compositional harmonic and melodic elements reveal about the therapist's experience?*
- b) *What do the lyrics reveal about the client's lived experience?*
- c) *What does the relationship between music and lyrics reveal about the therapeutic relationship?*

I wanted to create meaning of these songs: the lyrics, the music, and the relationship between the two. Thinking back to my own personal resource of interest in this type of study, I realized that my last step, for now, in the artistic process was the realization that lyrics and music are now inseparable – they have now become bound as lyrics and music are in songwriting. Turry (2006) found that his improvised music with a client had many implications for the client's process. At times, the music helped "fuse the lyrics" or "challenge the client in her point of view" (p. 364-366). Turry (2006) also mentions that, at times, his music sounds like "a musical manifestation of the words that were sung" (p. 365).

Music can serve many roles in relation to the lyrical content. Among many relational qualities, the music may be experienced as under, over, or intertwined with the lyrics. The music at times challenges Steven's lyric to emphasize my process, yet also supports Steven in his sensitive view of his music therapy. Reflecting on the question pertaining to musical elements and my experience of therapeutic relationship: my musical choices reflect my realization of the occasional struggle as a music therapist to find meaning in my work. The lyrics revealed Steven's view of himself in music therapy, how it differs from his past therapeutic experiences, and how it helped him overall. Through remixing, the different processes in our journals reflected challenge, emphasis, and support, answering the research questions. Remixing effects allowed for two perspectives to become one completed song, for each session, to display the dichotomy of therapeutic relationship, told by both of us included in the experience.

Through song engagement and remixing, Viega (2013) found that his "artistic encounters and subsequent analyses of the songs revealed the complex inner struggles...for adolescents" (ii). Through artistic engagement, Viega had a look inside the creative endeavors of adolescents who have experienced trauma, and as a result remixed the songs in a manner he felt reflected their lived experience in the original songs. This is to say that artistic engagement and involvement can provide further insight of experience.

Artistic engagement is sensitively proclaimed by means of raw and vulnerable artistic creation.

Therapist's Experience of Countertransference as Revealed in the Songs

In *There's a Difference*, there are specific musical qualities that represent the dual perspectives being illuminated. The melody is established as B-D-C, first rising to the minor third, then down to the minor second. Cooke (1959) describes the minor third as stoic acceptance, or even tragedy. The minor third is a "dignifiedly tragic note, firmly looking on the dark side of things" (p. 57– 58). While this was the first intervallic relationship to take place in the portrait and possibly telling of the overall mood of the portrait, the most prominent interval in the first motif is the minor second. The minor second is an interval of "spiritless anguish in a minor key" (Cooke, 1959).

This is possibly indicative of the feelings that arose from the session. I did not feel mental or physical pain while creating or engaging with the portrait, which is the definition of anguish, however there are possible implications of countertransference feelings playing out. While the portrait is meant to be a reflection of the session (Bruscia, 1998), that is not to say that countertransference was absent from the session. Thinking back to the personal notes of the session, I had thoughts of overreaching and intrapersonal tension. However, this is possibly a countertransference that I felt through introjection of Steven's resistance. My musical choices in my portrait were inspired by countertransference feelings of what I felt I "should have been doing" in session. This is where the theme *A Struggle* comes from, as pertaining to my initial notes from the session. This was possibly in fulfillment of a need that I became aware of later in arts-based supervision (discussed further below).

Client's Experience as Revealed in the Songs

Within the harmonic structure, the B-F# open fifth in the left hand gives a feeling of tension against the C melody note. This is, again, where the minor ninth or minor second interval establishes the mood of the portrait by creating dissonance and tension. There is resolution when the harmony moves to a C6 chord. The harmony moves between these two chords for some time until introducing a Cm6 chord. The minor sixth chord, or half-diminished chord is widely used in late Romantic and Impressionist music. The chord is most notable in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* and encapsulates feelings of despair and longing, as it is included in the leitmotif relating to Tristan who is calling out to his lost love, Isolde. The chord functions as a passing chord to either the tonic or the dominant. In this song, this chord resolves back to the tonic, releasing tension to then bring out the positive and content qualities of Steven's lyrics.

I found a tragic beauty within this chord and revisited it several times throughout the musical portrait. When the tension resolves and remains on the tonic chord, Steven's lyrics become the prominent feature of the song, which capture the feelings of what he is satisfied with in therapy. This is where the theme *What I Need* emerged from his journal. The tonic chord holds no specific quality, meaning there is no third in the chord to make it major or minor. The neutrality of this chord gives way for Steven's lyric "*For me,*" which was done to illustrate that ultimately Steven is coming to get what he wants out of this. This also served as a gentle reminder of the value that clients can place on therapy.

In *Not By Yourself*, the lyrics are supported through a continuous harmonic progression. The lyrics are indicative of Steven's commitment to music therapy and the sporadic lines in the song illuminate this. Steven's introspection is placed into the song as a few of his lyrical lines emerge at a time above the background of music that was inspired from the respective session. The mutuality of the journals allowed for a light-hearted feel in this song, with consonant harmony parts to Steven's lyrics, encompassed in a theme, which I reflected as *Feeling Connected*.

SUMMARY

It is vital to note that the results presented and the songs created are a representation of my own artistic process. My artistic decisions in song creation are only informed by my experiences that have thus far shaped my creative worldview and social awareness. This is not to say that I will always experience the art in this manner, but that process is timeless and constantly evolving. Arts-based research allows for a continuum of experience and engagement. The process of engaging with artistic materials and data permits the data to grow and become new over time. Since art is experienced at a purely subjective level, opportunities for the research to take new forms and perspectives is a unique and indigenous quality to arts-based research. Even within heuristic inquiries, the researcher can reconnect with the art at a later time and new meaning can be made. In Schenstead's (2009) first-person ABR of her relationship with her primary instrument, flute, she finds that, when reengaging with the material through improvisation she is still discovering knowledge.

Within this study, I engaged in arts-based supervision with my thesis advisor as a way of reflecting on my research process. The supervision, which held elements of improvisation and analytical methods, was beneficial for me to experience when I was in the song creation process. The supervision offered opportunities to revisit the research with a clear mind and make poignant connections between the research and my life processes. I also revisited countertransference that went into my musical portrait. I was able to play with the countertransference and symbolism through imagery within my improvisation with my supervisor. This allowed me to approach the data with an open mind and a better understanding of my own personal process.

Limitations

Because this study was grounded in artistic and aesthetic values, it was vital to the study for me to be flexible with technology to create artistic wholes. However, I was not as familiar as I would have liked to be with GarageBand, and therefore the learning curve limited my expressive range within remixing.

Although it was imperative that both Steven and I found comfortable and safe places to journal, it would have been ideal to have a designated time and place for each of us to record. Due to the fast-paced environment of the music therapy clinic in which I recorded, it was not always easy to find a time and place to gather my thoughts and record the musical portrait.

Also, I held the role of researcher and therapist-participant. This is both a positive thing for exploring heuristic experiences in music therapy, and a limitation due to

creating bias. Although subjective, artistic interpretivism was at the heart of the study, it should be handled delicately, which prompted arts-based supervision with my thesis advisor.

Recommendations for Research

For future endeavors, one could apply this design to other populations in music therapy to gain insight about therapeutic relationship. Of course, client music could be utilized as data for uncovering the dynamics of therapeutic relationship. Arts-based research results can be constantly evolving and growing and the results in this study have the potential to keep uncovering more information as well. It would be possible to bring these songs back into music therapy for the client to then remix in their own artistic perspective. The songs can be a performative experience, where the researcher recreates the songs in front of an audience and obtain qualitative summaries to gain wider perspective.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to make meaning of therapeutic journals in order to discover therapist and client processes in therapeutic relationship. The journals offered sensitive insights into Steven's and my distinct perspectives of music therapy. The mixing of journals and creation of song were drawn from my own heuristic inquiry as a music therapist and the songs can reflect the dynamic process. I have been able to learn a lot about myself, especially in engaging many times with my own recordings of improvisational musical portraits. I have found that artistic exploration and creation illuminates the phenomenon of therapeutic relationship and thus has given me further insight into myself, my relationship to music, and the evolving nature of a music therapist.

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