

4-18-2018

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Group Songwriting as a Self-Care Practice Among College Students

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Abstract

The present study looks to understand how undergraduate students experience group songwriting and to discern the self-care needs of these students. Drawing from two bodies of knowledge - college students' mental health and songwriting in music therapy - this appears to be the first study to examine this phenomenon. Students participated in group songwriting and reflected upon their experience. Findings add to the understanding of college students' experiences using music as self-care.

Research Questions

- How do college students interpret self-care?
- What are the facilitators' responsibilities in meeting the group's emergent needs within a songwriting experience?
- What aspects (if any) of group songwriting are helpful or hindering to college students regarding self-care?

Participants

- Five undergraduate University of Dayton students; Four females, one male
- Two with prior musical training, three without

Significance of Study

- Inform music therapy and related disciplines about songwriting with college students
- Understand self-care needs of college students in relation to mental health needs
- Promote music as a self-care practice among college students
- Promote music therapy as an effective service for college students



Review of Literature

- Literature points to support for therapeutic songwriting with people with ID/DD, ASD, psychiatric disorders, dementia, and in medical settings (Baker, F., McFerran, K., Stott, D., & Wigram, T., 2008)
- Music is a known influence in the daily lives of college students, thus making it an accessible and relatable medium (Aselton, 2012)
- Compared to the general population, college students are at a higher risk of experiencing increased levels of depression and anxiety, suggesting the need for self-care practices (Soet & Sevig, 2006)

Protocol

Songwriting Session

- Define self-care
- Generate song topics
- Determine musical style
- Create lyrics; Create melody
- Rehearse song; Record song

Time Frame

- One 75-minute songwriting session
- One 15-minute written feedback period
- One online reflection form

Findings

- Participants conceptualized self-care as personal and intentional self-love; they reported listening to music as emotional self-care
- Participants with prior musical training assumed greater musical leadership than those without
- Participants who felt strong group cohesion found the experience to be meaningful and successful
- In the researchers' perception, there is a relationship between facilitator musical leadership and participant sense of success
- Based on participant feedback, some people may benefit more from individual versus group songwriting
- Participants reported reduction of stress and feelings of mastery, pointing to the idea that group songwriting may serve as an effective medium of self-care for college students

Acknowledgements

Approved by the University of Dayton Institutional Review Board on August 30, 2017. Special thanks to the Stander Undergraduate Fellowship for funding this research.

Selected References

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