

# **Experiences of Single-Session Improvisational Group Music Therapy: Therapist and Patient Reflections from Inpatient Psychiatry**

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The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of therapists and patients in order to draw a composite picture of single-session improvisational group music therapy. This phenomenological study included ten therapist participants and nine patient participants. Each participant engaged with a single-session group musical improvisation and verbal discussion in a pre-designed protocol. The data analysis was conducted in three stages. In the first analysis stage, participants' verbal feedback and discussion were analyzed using Moustakas's method, yielding keywords with quotations. In the second stage, Moustakas's method of analysis was also adapted for an analysis of the music, yielding keywords with music excerpts of significant moments. In the third stage, the researcher conducted a composite review of keywords and significant quotations as well as significant musical moments. The data were comprehensively reviewed, reflected on, clustered, and thematized, yielding the following five themes: (a) the therapist's experience of work in inpatient psychiatric care, (b) the patient's experience of hospitalization in inpatient psychiatry, (c) the participants' experiences of group musical improvisation in single session, (d) the participants' challenges in single-session improvisation, and (e) therapeutic components in single-session group improvisational music therapy. This study demonstrated how, through this single-session group musical improvisation, participants in this setting were able to find the sense of safety and structure they needed to amplify and process their emotions, thoughts, and issues. Nonetheless, this study also noted the difficulties and challenges that participants experienced with this treatment modality, meaning that a range of creative arts therapies or conventional verbal interventions ought to be integrally and comprehensively considered.

## **Biography**

I am a creative arts psychotherapist at Bellevue Hospital in New York City, with a PhD in Expressive Therapies, a Master's degree in Music Therapy, and training in Psychological Counseling. I have been working with clients in different settings, including inpatient psychiatry, special education, and private practice since 2003. I use music, the arts, talk therapies, and mindfulness practices to help my clients deal with depression, anxiety, relationship problems, loss of identity/self-esteem, and life transitions. I have also been involved in coaching students since 2004 and am currently a supervisor of interns and fieldwork students. I have published and presented extensive studies on immigrants and music therapy and the use of music therapy in mental health care.

## **Recent publications and conference presentations**

2019: Concurrent session: Music Therapy for immigrant patients in inpatient psychiatric care. International Arts and Wellbeing conference in Telford, UK. August 7 2019.

2019: Keynote session: Experiences of single-session improvisational group music therapy: Therapist and patient reflections from inpatient psychiatry. Creative Arts Therapies Consortium, New York University, in New York, NY October 3, 2019.

2019: Concurrent Session: Bridging identities and languages: Group music therapy for immigrant patients in inpatient psychiatry. AMTA conference in Minneapolis, MN. November 22, 2019.

2020: Guest lecture: Music therapy for Chinese immigrant patients in inpatient psychiatry. Asian Social Workers' Alliance, New York University, in New York, NY. February 28, 2020.

2020: Guest lecture: Music Therapy for Patients with Depression. Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. September 14, 2020.

**Publications**

Chen, Y-Y. (2019) Single-session improvisational group music therapy in adult inpatient psychiatry: A pilot study of the therapist's experience, *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy*, 28(2), 151-168. doi: [10.1080/08098131.2018.1528560](https://doi.org/10.1080/08098131.2018.1528560).