

SONGWRITING AS A TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICE:
A HEURISTIC INQUIRY INTO THE SONGWRITER'S EXPERIENCE OF CREATING,
RECORDING, AND PERFORMING ORIGINAL POPULAR SONGS

by

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Abstract

Songwriting as a Transformative Practice:

A Heuristic Inquiry Into the Songwriter's Experience of Creating, Recording, and Performing Original Popular Songs

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This qualitative heuristic study explored the subjective experience of transformation resulting from the practice of songwriting. In semi-structured interviews, 6 men and 6 women, aged 35–69, described their experience of songwriting and discussed 1 song whose composition and sharing had had significant personal impact. Participants were predominantly White, well-educated, and had spiritual orientations divergent from mainstream religions. They had written an average of 315.4 songs over a mean of 36.3 years. Thematic content analysis revealed 6 primary themes. Two foundations of the practice—Connecting (related to the process of songwriting) and Communicating (related to the content)—were directly transformative, while also enabling 4 other transformative outcomes: Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference. Participants reported a variety of cocreative and transpersonal experiences in the process of creating, recording, and performing their songs, arising from Connecting with cowriters, listeners, influences not physically present (e.g., other artists), and spirit. Songs afforded participants a language superior to speech for Communicating, which facilitated Expressing Feelings, Sharing Self, and Sending A Message. Personal Growth occurred through songwriting as a result of Processing Experience to make meaning of painful material, and gaining increased confidence and self-knowledge (Empowerment). Some participants reported Song Theme Evolution over their lifetime, moving from songs focused on

personal catharsis to songs intended to inspire listeners. The most emphatically articulated theme was Making A Difference in others' lives; songwriters were profoundly moved and validated to learn of the positive effects their songs had had on listeners. Life, songwriting, and transformation were difficult to separate, so integral was songwriting to participants' lives. The findings strongly affirmed models of transformation in the expressive arts literature. Neither Ferrer's participatory philosophy of spirituality nor Washburn's triphasic model of transpersonal development was able to account for the full extent of songwriters' reported experiences of psychospiritual transformation.

Dedication

To my parents,
David and Judy,
with love and gratitude
for a lifetime of unwavering support

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I am deeply appreciative of the 12 songwriters who chose to participate in this study. I am moved and humbled by the trust they placed in me to represent their voices to the world, and by their generosity in sharing so much of themselves with me and honoring me with their songs. I hope that this dissertation adequately portrays their gifts, commitment, and passion.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

My interest in songwriting derives from personal experience. Music has been an integral part of the fabric of my life since I was a small child. My grandmother was a piano teacher, my aunt and uncle are classical singers, and both my parents were involved in amateur music when I was growing up, my father as a clarinetist and my mother as a cellist and choral alto. I acquired proficiency as a classical pianist at a young age, and discovered the joy of participating in impromptu chamber music with my family, singing in choirs, and playing violin in the school orchestra. Two treasured childhood experiences relate to collaborative music-making. I can still recall viscerally the exhilaration of joining with other singers to fill a concert hall with richly textured choral music as the swell of our collective sound, so much larger than any one of us in the choir, soared through the hall and reverberated through my body. I remember delighting in the intense focus, attunement with others, and sense of accomplishment I experienced from sliding onto the piano stool to sight-read an accompaniment for my father or fill in for the pianist in one of the musical theatre productions my mother was directing.

Along with my classical musical activities, I also loved listening to punk and new wave, which were the dominant popular music genres during my adolescence in the UK. In my 20s, I performed covered songs briefly in two bands with coworkers at company events, as a vocalist, keyboard player, and occasional drummer. Over the next couple of decades, I pursued a career in business, and music-making became a much smaller part of my life. It was while I was in an extremely demanding executive position that I began to take private voice lessons. An instinctive feeling that I needed a musical and creative counterweight to the gravity and intensity of my professional responsibilities, something joyful and connected to my core essence, led me to seek this out for respite and personal growth.

Although I had sung easily and with a good range as an adolescent, by the time I was in my 30s I had developed significant blocks to free vocal expression. The journey of reclaiming my voice continues to this day, but has been a steady quest in the 11 years since I took my first voice lesson. It was this challenge with singing freely that led me to explore a workshop in Sound Music Healing, and connect with a community of individuals who believed music was a path to personal transformation. Shortly thereafter, during a contemplative practice, I understood that I needed to step away from the business world in search of a way of enabling others to find voice, both metaphorically and physically. I began my doctoral studies in clinical transpersonal psychology within a few months, embracing the call to follow my interest in blending psychology with the use of the expressive arts in the service of healing and finding voice. I began training as a therapist and bringing creative expression into my practice with clients.

I had reopened the door to music in my life and the universe responded. A colleague in the Sound Music Healing program started a songwriting class and invited me to attend a graduation show at which her students shared their original songs. As I experienced each performer offering an intimate and personalized sharing of self through lyrics and music, I felt delight and a giant wave of envy surge through me. I knew I wanted more than anything to do that. I signed up on the spot for the next class, although it meant driving 2 hours each way to attend. I wrote half a dozen songs within a couple of months. I joined a second songwriting circle, and enrolled in a songwriting class at a community college. I began recording my original songs with simple piano and vocal arrangements and sharing them with friends. I started learning bass guitar, jamming informally, and offering some of my songs to the group to explore: Experiencing them taking shape and evolving through collaboration in a band was thrilling.

Composing and sharing my songs has brought me joy and change in my life. Songwriting, for me, is intense, empowering, embodied, grounding, connecting, and enlivened by spirit.

The transformative power of songwriting from my own experience can be illustrated with a song I wrote shortly after a very difficult period in one of my oldest and mostly deeply valued friendships led to estrangement between us. A simple phrase, “I’ll see you in the future,” came to me while my car was being smog-tested. I was astonished to find myself in tears as I rapidly pulled out my laptop in the waiting area, and captured the lyrics that flowed forth from that phrase:

I’ll See You in the Future
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I’m sitting at the gate
Finger hovering on *Send*
Gap between us so great
You once were my best friend
Was it inevitable
Our paths would veer apart?
Thirty years of friendship
Ends up in broken hearts

I’ll see you in the future
When we both can clearly see
Each other’s strength and truth, dear friend
And can let the other be

I had a really hard time
With your desperate need
Sudden midlife trauma
Left you changed and hard to read
You had a really hard time
When I stood my ground
Angry finger in my face
I gave up, turned around

I’ll see you in the future
When we both can clearly see
A way to hold the space, dear friend
A space for you and me

In this poignant limbo
 Missing all we shared
 Wondering if the day will come
 When things can be repaired

I'll see you in the future
 When we both can clearly see
 Life's changed us both so much, dear friend
 And still we'll choose to be
 Life friends you and me, my friend
 Life friends, you and me.

I worked on the song with my songwriting circle, recorded it, and first performed it at an event honoring the creative expression of students at my institution. The public sharing felt like a tribute to the importance of that friendship in my life and also a little akin to something one might offer at a memorial service. I felt deeply vulnerable as I exposed through my song how much this person had meant to me and how affected I was by the loss. I felt held, supported, and witnessed by the audience, and less isolated in my grief. This experience of allowing others to see my vulnerability and learning how to remain present in that state represented important growth for me, beyond the significance of the personal disclosure associated with the subject matter of the song.

My creative process with this song gave me a depth of understanding about my grief at the loss of the friendship, and helped me to work through it to find a place of acceptance and hope for future reconciliation. It also opened me to my feelings, inviting me to experience them flowing through me, rather than retreating to my head and rationalizing away their significance. During a brief spell when we were in renewed e-mail contact, I took what felt like a huge risk and shared a recording of the song with the friend in question. I had thought about doing this for months, and felt incredible tension and anticipation as I awaited a possible response. She acknowledged the song and its beauty, and then chose to share an unsent e-mail to me from 2

years before, offering her perspective on what had happened to cause the rift. This “conversation” felt like an important step in developing mutual empathy. Two and a half years after the rupture, I reached out to my friend and she agreed to meet. We are slowly rebuilding our connection. I believe the hope for reconciliation held by the song, and kept alive in my performance of it, aided us in taking these tentative steps toward each other.

When I talked about my songwriting experience with other musicians who compose and perform original songs (henceforth referred to as either *songwriter-musicians* or simply *songwriters*), most of them reported similar experiences of personal growth through the sharing of their music. This led me to wonder how much research had been undertaken to explore the transformative impact of songwriting and to contemplate a study of my own. I began by defining the population of songwriters I was interested in learning more about by considering the genre of songs being written and the overall size of the population.

I was particularly interested in how songwriters are affected by expressing themselves through popular song lyrics, because popular music seems relatively unconstrained in form and content compared with other genres; I hypothesized this might allow for the most ready expression of contemporary personal experience through music. Although what constitutes popular music may seem intuitively obvious to listeners, I discovered that there is no agreement on a definition of *popular music* in the literature (Blacking, 1995; Fairchild, 2008; Grossberg, 2002; Jewell, 1980; Morrison, 2007). Morrison (2007) noted that the “meaning of this construct has shifted historically and can vary in different cultures” (p. 53). Fairchild (2008) commented on the lack of any unifying principles to delineate what researchers and lay listeners would classify as popular music, saying that examples can always be found that fall outside the bounds of any definition proffered which most people would nonetheless agree should be classified as

popular music. Middleton (n.d.) described the various approaches to definitions of popular music as based on scale of activity, means of dissemination, or link with a particular social group, while noting that each of these has obvious drawbacks and that nothing about the definitions has remained static over time. A common approach to defining popular music is by exclusion; popular music is any music that is not classical (art) music or folk music (Tagg, 1982). Tagg (1982) codified this by laying out an “axiomatic triangle” (p. 41), comprising, folk, art, and popular music, and distinguishing these musics through evaluation of six characteristics. According to his taxonomy, popular music is (a) produced and transmitted primarily by professionals (although this has clearly changed since 1982, with the advent of digital music recording and the Internet); (b) usually mass distributed; (c) stored and distributed primarily through recordings; (d) mainly found in industrial societies; (e) not typically characterized by written theory and aesthetics; and (f) not anonymous, with the composer and lyricist identified.

Another difficulty with defining popular music is the possible confounding of creative process and creative product. As will be discussed in chapter 2, distinguishing these aspects of creativity is the subject of considerable focus in creativity research. Blacking (1995) pointed to this issue with regard to the challenges of creating a taxonomy of musics, and wrote that:

Terms such as “art,” “folk,” or “popular” can be misleading: although they may suggest the kind of experience the music is intended to convey, they are too often used to refer to the technical complexity that it displays. The process of creation is therefore confused with the musical product. (pp. 31–32)

He advocated adopting process-based definitions for musical genres. In a virtual forum among respected researchers in popular music, Björnberg (The International Advisory Editors, 2005) defined it as reflecting “the general conditions of music in contemporary information society” (p. 134). In the same forum, Manuel (The International Advisory Editors, 2005) offered his definition: “the music’s style can be *seen to have evolved* [emphasis added] in connection with

its dissemination by the mass media, as embedded in a music industry based on marketing of recordings on a mass commodity basis” (p. 134). Thus, for Manuel a particular example of popular music does not necessarily need to be in mass distribution; however, its style must be related to or derived from styles observed in mass-distributed music. These latter two definitions contain elements of Tagg’s (1982) six characteristics, as well as approaches pointed to by Middleton (n.d.).

Given the apparent difficulty in coming up with a satisfactory definition for popular music among those most expert in the field, and drawing most directly from Tagg (1982) and Björnberg (The International Advisory Editors, 2005), I defined popular music for this study as any music other than classical (art) music produced in contemporary, industrial society, that is actively distributed to the general public through online sites or physical recordings. This avoids attempts to distinguish between folk and popular music and allows for the fact that definitions may have shifted over time, since it is possible that some songwriters may have a repertoire of songs that could be characterized as either folk or popular music depending on the era in which the songs were written and the definition used.

As will be discussed in depth in chapter 3, my research method involved conducting interviews with songwriter-musicians. When selecting participants, I determined that a couple of specific inclusion and exclusion criteria were needed with regard to the nature of their compositions, beyond the definition of popular music laid out above, in order to bound the scope of inquiry sufficiently. These will be further explored in chapter 3 and are summarized here so that the definition of popular music for purposes of this study is clear from the outset and for the review of the literature presented in chapter 2. Participating songwriters were required to be lyricists and create songs with lyrics. I did not intend to study songwriters identified with

indigenous cultures whose music was intended to serve in rituals or healing practices specific to that culture. Songwriters creating music primarily for the purpose of individual or community spiritual practice were excluded. Songwriters whose songs were based on synthesizing sampled sounds or creating mixes with lyrics from others' compositions were also excluded, as were those with songwriting experience limited to writing for theatre or movies where the songwriter was not the author of the play or script.

Having defined the population of songwriters by musical genre, I next sought to understand the potential relevance and impact of my research by estimating the size of the population. Determining the number of U. S. songwriter-musicians composing popular songs is difficult, for several reasons (Artist Revenue Streams, n.d.). First, there is no universal definition of what constitutes a songwriter or a musician. Further, when approached by a particular researcher or surveying organization, individuals who are composing and performing original music may not identify with the proposed definitions and hence may not identify themselves. Second, there are no standard certifications or tests required to become a songwriter or musician; thus, there are no certifying bodies whose data might be aggregated to assist with an estimate. Third, while there are several organizations to which songwriters and musicians might belong, membership numbers are hard to come by, individuals may belong to more than one or none of these, and some organizations' membership includes a wider range of roles within the music community than just songwriters and musicians. Fourth, government data issued annually by the U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012) for "music directors and composers" ("Entertainment and Sports Occupations", para. 5) and "musicians and singers" ("Entertainment and Sports Occupations", para. 6) are based on surveying organizations that employ individuals in these positions, thus excluding the large constituency of self-employed musicians, as well as the many

songwriters and musicians who are not professionals. Data from sites that track music sales and airplay pertain to musical products (songs and albums) rather than the musicians themselves. Online music aggregators represent only the work of those artists represented in their catalogs. With the aforementioned difficulty in concretizing a definition of popular music and musical genres, the nature of the music being composed by those individuals who are being counted in the above statistics is difficult to classify, and often not sought. Thus, data may also include composers of classical music, for example.

With these caveats, there exist nonetheless some data points that help to indicate the potential size of the population of songwriter-musicians in the United States. Two of the three major organizations that represent professional songwriters issue statements about their membership numbers. The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP; 2014) claims a membership of “more than 500,000 U.S. composers, songwriters, lyricists, and music publishers of every kind of music” (para. 1). Broadcast Music, Inc. (BMI; 2014) has “more than 600,000 songwriters, composers and music publishers” (para. 2). Since individuals most commonly join only one such organization, this suggests a possible total of 1 million, although music publishers are included in the numbers. The estimated number may be even larger, since the third major songwriters’ association (SESAC) does not publish membership data. It is likely that songwriters who do not identify as professional or in need of the services of an organization that manages licensing are excluded from this total, thus suggesting an even larger population size. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data for 2011 show a total of 27,940 musicians and singers, and 29,420 independent writers in the arts, design, entertainment, sports, and media occupations (U. S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2011), a tiny fraction of the ASCAP

and BMI membership totals. For the reasons discussed above, these data are likely not a credible source for the true population, which includes many self-employed and amateur songwriters.

Another way to approach sizing the population of songwriter-musicians is by examining the number of musicians in the United States. A Gallup poll conducted for the National Association of Music Merchants in 2006 revealed that “Americans are making more music than any other nationality,” “more than one-half of U.S. households (52%) has at least one person, age 5 or older, who currently plays a musical instrument,” and “the fastest growing segment of music makers is between the ages of 18 and 34; an increase of 5% percent since 2003” (National Association of Music Merchants, 2006, para. 3). It is extremely common for adolescents and young adults to form informal popular music groups (bands), and for these to compose, record, and perform original songs (Bennett, 1980; Biasutti, 2012; Campbell, 1995; Green, 2001; Lilliestam, 1996). Thus, a significant proportion of the large number of musicians reported in the Gallup poll may be expected to be participating in songwriting. These numbers are clearly much larger than the ASCAP and BMI totals, given that the population of the United States aged 10 and older was about 264 million in 2011 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2011).

These data, taken as a whole, suggest that there is a sizable population of songwriter-musicians in the United States. What is known of their experience of songwriting as it relates to personal transformation? Creativity and the creative process have been studied extensively by psychologists over the last century (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Guilford, 1970; MacKinnon, 1978; May, 1975; Moustakas, 1977; Rogers, 1976; Sawyer, 2003, 2012; Simonton, 1999; Wallas, 1926). Researchers have focused on individual personality traits and cognitive processes, as well as sociocultural and group properties of creativity. The particular creative practice of popular songwriting has been studied by scholars (Barba, 2005; Biasutti, 2012;

Campbell, 1995; Davis, 2005; Fornäs, Lindberg, & Sernhede, 1995; Gay, 1991; Lilliestam, 1996; Sena-Martinez, 2012) and explored in the popular media (Boyd, 1992; *Classic albums series*, 2010; Flanagan, 1986; Nash, 2002; Zollo, 2003). Use of songwriting in support of therapeutic objectives in clinical populations has been researched by psychologists, music therapists, and music educators (Austin, 2001; Felicity Baker & Wigram, 2005b; Bruscia, 1998a; Cordobés, 1997; de l'Etoile, 2002; Freed, 1987; O'Callaghan, 1997; Silverman, 2011). However, I located only two studies in my literature search (Barba, 2005; Sena-Martinez, 2012) that examine how songwriters who record and perform their original popular music compositions subjectively experience transformation as a result of this practice; expanding the research in this area was the main impetus for my study.

An additional aspect of the songwriting experience is collaboration (Biasutti, 2012; Davis, 2005; Gay, 1991; Green, 2001; Sawyer, 2003; Vakeva, 2010). Further, songwriters report transpersonal (Hartelius, Caplan, & Rardin, 2007) experiences, including flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), peak experiences (Maslow, 1964), and connection with something beyond themselves in the creative experience of writing songs (Boyd, 1992; Flanagan, 1986; Zollo, 2003). A better understanding of how these experiences may be supporting songwriters' development in positive ways could make a contribution to the literature on transpersonal growth and transformation, and complement the existing literature on more objective assessments of the benefits of songwriting.

In order to expand the research into the subjectively experienced transformative power of songwriting, I undertook a qualitative, exploratory study to pursue the research question: How do songwriters experience change in themselves and their lives as a result of composing, recording, and performing original popular songs? Subquestions were: What factors in the songwriting

creative process are associated with the songwriter-musician's transformation? What is the experience and impact of intersubjectivity in this process?

Definitions

Beyond those given earlier in this chapter for the terms songwriter-musician and popular music, additional definitions are needed in order for the research question to be properly qualified. Definitions for the terms *recording*; *performing*; *creativity* and *the creative process*; *songwriting process*; *change and transformation*; and *intersubjectivity* are specified in this section. The term *transpersonal experience* is defined as well, since this emerged as relevant in evaluating the results of the study.

Recording and performing. For this study, recordings were permitted to be professionally or personally created, and had to be distributed through online sites or commercial retail channels and generally available to individuals beyond the songwriter and his or her musical group. Recordings were to be available either in digital format for download and streaming or provided on physical media (e.g., compact discs). Performance was defined as playing original songs live before an audience of at least 10 people at least four times a year for 1 or more years prior to the commencement of the study. This was intended to select songwriters actively performing at the time of the study, and with enough separate performance events to allow for some depth and possible variation of experience.

Creativity and the creative process. As will be shown in chapter 2, the definition and conceptualization of creativity has evolved significantly over the last century in Western academic research. Creativity has been viewed as an aspect of personality (Guilford, 1950; MacKinnon, 1965), as a function of cognitive processes (Runco & Chand, 1995; Sloboda, 1988), as an expression of self-actualization and personal development (Maslow, 1968; May, 1975;

Rogers, 1976), and as a sociocultural phenomenon (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Sawyer, 2012). Researchers have defined creativity as the contribution of something novel and of high value to society as judged by those in a position to assess its value (*Big C* creativity), as well as the demonstration of originality and flexibility in the personal activities of daily living, known as *everyday* or *Small C* creativity (Richards, 2007).

For purposes of this study, I defined creativity as Small C creativity, since I was not concerned with whether the songs my participants had created were considered Big C creative by those who might be considered legitimate critics of popular music. Rather, I was interested in subjective experience. The capacity to generate an original song is a creative act, and my goal was to learn more about how such personal innovations might have led to change in the lives of songwriters.

Researchers have also explored creativity as a process, beginning with Wallas' (1926) four-stage model that looked at how a creative product came into being. Another conceptualization of the creative process was as the driving force and expression of a person's ongoing psychological and spiritual development through the lifespan (Jung, 1964; Maslow, 1968; May, 1975; Moustakas, 1977). These approaches to creative process are not mutually exclusive. The former emphasized the process relating to an external expression of creativity and the latter how creative process fits within the larger set of processes that define human existence. Both definitions had relevance for this study, in that I expected to learn about how songwriters conceptualized the creative process relating to the composition of a song, as well as how they viewed this experience in the context of their personal development.

Songwriting process. Songwriting is one particular example of a creative process. Reflecting the micro and macro definitions of creative process above, I defined the songwriting

process as (a) the lifelong experience of bringing into being a series of popular songs with lyrics and sharing them through recording and live performance (chapter 3 provides more explicit definitions for inclusion criteria with regard to these aspects of the process); and (b) the steps, phases, or other process elements that occur in the writing of a particular song.

Transpersonal experience. Following Walsh and Vaughan (1993), “transpersonal experiences may be defined as experiences in which the sense of identity or self extends beyond (*trans*) the individual or personal to encompass wider aspects of humankind, life, psyche, and cosmos” (p. 3). Transpersonal psychology is the “psychological study of transpersonal experiences and their correlates” (Walsh & Vaughn, 1993, p. 3). In seeking a definition for the term *transpersonal*, it is useful to refer to the thematic analysis of definitions of transpersonal psychology published over a 35-year period conducted by Hartelius, Caplan, and Rardin (2007). They arrived at three themes that captured different aspects of the field. The first, *Beyond Ego*, or “transpersonal as content” (Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 144), “focuses on the self as beyond ordinary ego separateness, recognizing the complex interconnectedness of self with all, including the cosmos as a whole” (Friedman & Hartelius, 2013, p. xxiv), and comprises states of consciousness beyond the ordinary; stages of development and aspirations beyond the ego; and paths, such as meditation, that help to cultivate these. The second, *Pervading Personhood*, or “transpersonal as context” (Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 144), “focuses on integrative approaches through employing the most inclusive framework to comprehend self, emphasizing spiritual and transcendent qualities” (Friedman & Hartelius, 2013, p. xxiv) and considers the embodied and sociocultural contexts of the person. The third theme, *Changing Humanity*, or “transpersonal as catalyst” (Hartelius et al., 2007, p. 144), focuses on transformation of the self, as well as social transformation through application of the findings of transpersonal psychology. Thus,

transpersonal experience, when considered from the psychological lens, relates to beyond ego experience, situated in a holistic (embodied) and integrative context, with the possibility of effecting transformation for both the individual and society.

Change and transformation. The research question was concerned with the ways in which songwriter-musicians experienced change in themselves and their lives as a result of their songwriting practice. In order to allow participants to define and express change in their terms, I refrained from imposing a definition and used the term change in my interactions with them, in the belief that this was the most neutral way to talk about the possible range of transformative experiences that might result from songwriting. However, for academic purposes in the conduct of the study it was important to operationalize change.

I began by examining the terms change and transformation, which on the surface may seem synonymous. Merriam-Webster defines the first meaning of the (transitive) verb to change (“Change,” n.d.) as either “to make different in some particular” or “to make radically different.” As an intransitive verb, the first meaning of to change is “to become different” and the fifth meaning is “to undergo *transformation* [emphasis added], transition, or substitution.” This latter definition of the verb to change thus includes transformation, which seems to reinforce the synonymous nature of these terms. The first meanings of to transform include “to change in composition or structure” and “to change in character or condition” (“Transform,” n.d.).

Metzner (1998) applied this idea of restructuring and characterological change to psychological experience, suggesting that “transformation . . . implies that the patterns . . . are actually changed. The structures and functioning of our psyche become different” (p. 15). Further, he noted that this may occur in many different ways and be abrupt or gradual; internally or externally induced; invisible to others or evident; a result of grace or effort; and progressive,

regressive, or digressive. Valle and Mohs (1998) defined transformation as “a change in one’s preferences, inclinations, emotional and behavioral habits, and understanding of life itself” (p. 101). Braud, Dufrechou, Raynolds, and Schroeter (2000) defined transformation as having the qualities of being persistent, pervasive, and profound.

For purposes of this research, I chose to differentiate between change and transformation, viewing change as a transitory phenomenon and transformation as a more fundamental and longer lasting outcome, along the lines of Braud et al. (2000). In this sense, transformation is more trait-like, while change is more state-like. In addition to this distinction, I held a very broad notion of transformation for the study, best represented by the term *psychospiritual transformation*, which signifies a very holistic and all-encompassing perspective on the kinds of transformation a person might undergo. The adjective psychospiritual amalgamates reference to both psychological and spiritual qualities. This word is not found in the Merriam-Webster online dictionary. It is a term closely associated with the field of transpersonal theory (Ferrer, 2002; Maslow, 1968; Washburn, 1995; Wilber, 1981), which takes a holistic view of the scope of human development as comprising both psychological and spiritual experience and evolution of the individual, and as discussed and defined above in the definition of transpersonal experience. Thus the term psychospiritual transformation might be thought of as “transpersonal transformation” (Braud et al., 2000, p. 115), relating to persistent and profound reorganization of a person’s psychological and spiritual ways of being and experiences, and his or her self-concept and worldview. This is the definition I adopted for my study.

Intersubjectivity. The term intersubjectivity is explicated in depth in chapter 2, and encompasses a broad range of experiences that may be collaborative or transpersonal or both. Intersubjectivity is defined for this study in accordance with Stolorow (1997), as an “individual’s

world of inner experience and the embeddedness of this world with other such worlds in a continual flow of reciprocal mutual influence” (p. 338).

This chapter has presented the rationale for conducting the research and set forth the research question to be investigated, along with definitions for key terms. The next chapter reviews literature relevant to the scope of inquiry.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

In order to situate and justify the research question, this chapter reviews pertinent literature in four areas. It begins with a review of the literature on creativity and the creative process in general terms. As will become clear, an important aspect of creativity relates to the impact of collaboration, interaction, and experiences beyond the self, which I group broadly under the rubric of intersubjectivity and cocreativity. The second section of this chapter covers these concepts from a theoretical perspective, and then shows how they have been incorporated into creativity research. The third section details domain-specific research on songwriting as a creative process. The chapter concludes with theories of transformation, drawn from transpersonal psychology and the expressive arts, and a review of the literature on transformative experiences arising from the practice of songwriting.

Creativity and the Creative Process

The concept of creativity has been the subject of exploration for centuries, and its definition has evolved throughout history, reflecting the philosophical, epistemological, psychological, spiritual, and cultural understandings of different eras and societies (Sawyer, 2012). Over the last century, Western scientific study of creativity has followed a trajectory of increasing complexity in dimensionality and interdisciplinarity, leading to a number of “waves” of conceptualization, definition, theory, and modeling of the creative person and process. These parallel and reflect the developments in psychology and philosophy over the past 100 years. During the late modernist era in the first part of the 20th century, with its focus on empirical rationalism (founded in Bacon, 1267; Descartes, 1641; Kant, 1787), primary emphasis was placed on the individual as an isolated creative being. Grounded in psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1949; Jung, 1969) and cognitive-behavioral psychology (Beck, 1976; Damasio, 1994;

Neisser, 1967; Skinner, 1974), creativity researchers approached their work from a psychoanalytic (Fossi, 1985), or personality-based and cognitive perspective (Barron, 1995; Fossi, 1985; Guilford, 1970; Piaget, 1976; Runco & Chand, 1995; Torrance, 1966). With the postmodernist shift to social constructivism (Crotty, 1998; Gergen, 2009) and the advent of humanistic–existential psychology (Bugental, 1964; Maslow, 1968; Yalom, 1980), the creativity research agenda expanded to exploration of humanistic and sociocultural dimensions (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012; Blacking, 1995; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; May, 1975; Rogers, 1976; Simonton, 1975). Significant contributions to the literature that relate to the process or the experience of creativity are examined in detail. Discussion of creativity in the context of transpersonal psychology is addressed at the end of the chapter.

The development of cognitive psychology inspired a focus on cognitive processes in creativity research, which led to early process models of creativity. Wallas (1926) developed a four-stage model of the creative process, inspired by the content of the scientist von Helmholtz’s 70th birthday speech in 1891. This model has since been widely explored and validated (Sawyer, 2012). The first stage is *preparation*, during which preliminary work is conducted. This involves “collecting data and information, searching for related ideas, listening to suggestions” (Sawyer, 2012, p. 58) as well as assimilating domain-specific knowledge and conventions. The second stage is *incubation*, during which the person is “not consciously thinking about the problem” (Wallas, 1926, p. 70) and “the prepared material is internally elaborated and organized” (Sawyer, 2012, p. 58). The next stage was termed *illumination* by Wallas—the “appearance of the ‘happy idea’ together with the psychological events that immediately preceded and accompanied that appearance” (p. 70)—and is also known as *insight*, “the ‘aha’ or ‘eureka’ moment” (Sawyer, 2012, p. 59). The fourth stage posited by Wallas was

verification, “in which both the validity of the idea was tested, and the idea itself was reduced to exact form” (p. 70). Verification has since been subdivided into *evaluation* and *elaboration* (Sawyer, 2012, p. 59), resulting in a five-step model in some literature (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). The steps of the Wallas model are also reflected in the heuristic inquiry method (Moustakas, 1990), to be discussed in detail in chapter 3.

With the dawning of the humanistic–existentialist psychology movement came consideration of creativity as an expression of healthy human development, although still with a focus on the individual (Maslow, 1968). Rogers (1976) broadened humanistic writing on creativity to situate the individual within his or her social context. He defined creativity as “the emergence in action of a novel relational product, growing out of the uniqueness of the individual on the one hand, and the materials, events, people, or circumstances of his life on the other” (p. 297). Reflecting on the nature of creativity, he wrote:

The mainspring of creativity appears to be the same tendency which we discover so deeply as the curative force in psychotherapy—*man’s tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities*. By this I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organisms and human life—the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature—the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism or the self. . . . It is this tendency which is the primary motivation for creativity as the organism forms new relationships to the environment in its endeavor most fully to be itself. (p. 298)

May (1975) considered the process of creativity from a humanistic–existentialist perspective. He defined creativity as “the process of *bringing something new into being*” (p. 39) and formulated a model that reflected creativity as “the encounter of the intensively conscious human being with his or her world” (p. 54). Such an encounter may or may not be willed, according to May, but requires a degree of engagement and has an absorbing, joyful intensity that “is not necessarily connected with conscious purpose or willing. It may occur in reverie or in dreams, or from so-called unconscious levels” (May, 1975, p. 45). May also saw insight or breakthroughs as integral to the creative process, arguing that “processes of forming, making,

building go on even if we are not consciously aware of them at the time” (p. 46). He suggested that these can be considered either as a formulation of the unconscious or as cognitive processes beneath the level of conscious awareness. May stated that insights only occur “in those areas in which we are intensively committed and on which we concentrate in our waking, conscious experience” (pp. 90–91).

Moustakas (1977) also contemplated the nature of creativity, echoing some of the humanistic–existential themes that considered creativity as significantly related to, if not synonymous with, the human developmental journey. He wrote:

Creativity is a process that expresses itself in unique and varying forms . . . permitting thought, feeling, spirit to flow freely, allowing the inner scenes to come into awareness and form new life. Creativity is a turning point awakened in times of challenge or crisis, involving an unknown and unpredictable path . . . as the individual engages in new actions and creates new life. (p. 25)

For Moustakas (1977), “it is this experience of expressing and actualizing one’s individual identity in an integrated form, in communion with one’s self, with nature, and with other persons that I call creative” (p. 24).

The rise of humanistic–existential psychology and postmodernist social constructivism led to an expansion of the research focused on creativity to incorporate the effects of social and cultural context. Amabile (1982) noted that prior research had implicitly depended on a subjective appraisal of what constituted a creative act. *Domains* are defined as specialized areas of knowledge, such as architecture or astrophysics. She argued that creativity was actually validated by domain experts, implying that it was inherently a social rather than an individual phenomenon. Amabile and other socioculturally oriented researchers made this explicit by defining creativity, in Big C terms, as “a novel product that attains some level of social recognition” (Sawyer, 2012, p. 27).

Amabile (Amabile & Pillemer, 2012) “proposed a comprehensive theory of creativity that integrated conceptualizations of intrinsic motivation and the social environment with the cognitive and personality constructs that earlier theorists had emphasized” (p. 9). Her componential theory of creativity comprised four variables (Amabile, 1996): three multiplicative, intra-individual dimensions—(a) domain-relevant skills; (b) creativity-relevant processes (flexible cognitive style, personality traits, persistent workstyle); and (c) intrinsic task motivation—plus (d) the individual’s social environment (which can affect the intra-individual components). More recently, Amabile, Barsade, Mueller, and Staw (2005) suggested that affect also be added to the model. Amabile’s (1996) five-stage process model emphasized particular creativity components at each stage: (a) problem or task identification (task motivation); (b) preparation (domain-relevant skills); (c) response generation (creativity-relevant processes, task motivation); (d) response validation (domain-relevant skills); and (e) outcome, during which stage the response is communicated and the outcome of the process is evaluated.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) explored creativity on both the individual level and in a sociocultural framework. Like Rogers (1976), May (1975), Amabile (1996), and Simonton (1999), he saw creativity as the result of individuals’ contextual experiences: “Creativity does not happen inside people’s heads, but in the interaction between a person’s thoughts and a sociocultural context. It is a systemic rather than an individual phenomenon” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 23). Csikszentmihalyi defined creativity as “any act, idea, or product that changes an existing domain, or that transforms an existing domain into a new one” (p. 28). The *field* refers to those individuals who “act as gatekeepers to the domain” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 28) and who determine what is considered innovative. Csikszentmihalyi’s systems model of creativity thus comprised the domain and the field, as well as the individual, who, in order to be creative,

must “internalize the entire system that makes creativity possible” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 51). He mapped his systems theory of creativity onto the Wallas (1926) process model, while advocating for an adaptation to allow for recursion. Sociocultural additions to the model included (a) the influence of existing domain knowledge and the pressures of the human environment (including the people and institutions that make up the field, as well as the larger social context) on the initial conceptualization of the problem in the preparation stage; and (b) the importance of keeping up with domain knowledge and being open to feedback from the field in the verification stage.

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) also researched attributes of the creative person. He studied 91 creative people over 60 years of age who had made a major (Big C) creative contribution in their domain, to learn more about their characteristics. Building on his seminal work conceptualizing *flow*—“the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990, p. 4), he found evidence in his participants’ descriptions of their experience in creative work to suggest that flow was often associated with their creative process. The main qualities of the flow experience were present and shown to be contributors to creativity, in particular having an optimal balance between challenges posed and level of skill possessed, a loss of self-consciousness, and an autotelic attitude towards the activity (i.e., the activity itself is the reward rather than some anticipated future benefit).

Sociocultural creativity researchers incorporated the social context influencing individual Big C creativity through systemic models that referenced the field and domain. Some have argued that individual models of creativity fail to account for the ways in which interactions with others lead to creative behaviors and products (Csikszentmihalyi & Sawyer, 1995; John-Steiner, 2000; Sawyer, 2007), saying that creativity can *never* be situated solely within an individual and

is inherently a social property. More recent research has extended these relational aspects of creativity to consider ways in which groups of people collaborate in creative products and processes (Sawyer, 2003, 2006, 2007; Taggar, 2002; Woodman, Sawyer, & Griffin, 1993).

These models are discussed later in this chapter.

Intersubjectivity and Cocreativity

An assumption of this study was that the creative process is implicitly *cocreative*—that is, that all stages of the creative process, and its outcomes in the form of creative performances and products, result from intersubjective experiences within the relational, cultural, and spiritual context of the creator(s). Intersubjectivity was defined in chapter 1 in accordance with Stolorow (1997) as an “individual’s world of inner experience and the embeddedness of this world with other such worlds in a continual flow of reciprocal mutual influence” (p. 338). In order to investigate this assumption of cocreativity more fully, one of the research subquestions concerned the role of intersubjectivity in the songwriter’s experience. This section begins by exploring philosophical and psychological theories pertinent to the concepts of cocreativity and intersubjectivity and then examines the ways in which these are incorporated specifically into creativity research.

Theories of intersubjectivity. Intersubjectivity theory (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992) extended earlier psychodynamic object relations theories (Fairbairn, 1952; Kohut, 1971), which were based on the idea that development of a person’s sense of self occurred through relational experiences over the lifetime. Stolorow (1993) defined it as follows:

Intersubjectivity theory is a field theory or systems theory whose central metaphor is the larger relational system—what we call the intersubjective field or context—in which psychological phenomena crystallize. Ours is a vocabulary of interacting subjectivities, colliding organizing principles, reciprocal mutual influence. (p. 450)

This shift toward viewing human development in terms of relationality “can be described as a transition from focus on the empowerment and fulfillment of the individual to an understanding of the individual as always in some sense in relationship with his or her environment” (Blackstone, 2007, pp. 19–20). Psychological experiences are to be understood “not as products of isolated intrapsychic mechanisms, but as forming at the interface of reciprocally interacting subjectivities” (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992, p. 1). Stolorow’s (2002) ideas about the mutuality of relationship injected a transpersonal dimension into psychoanalytic theory, in line with Hartelius et al.’s (2007) definitions of transpersonal as beyond-ego and holistic. He wrote that “an intersubjective field—any system constituted by interacting experiential worlds—is neither a mode of experiencing nor a sharing of experience. It is the contextual precondition for having any experience at all” (Stolorow, 2002, p. 329). In other words, experience is “codetermined” (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992, p. 24) by individuals within the intersubjective field through their mutual interactions. Since there is no longer any dualism between intrapsychic and interpersonal realms of experience, creativity is inherently an experience of the intersubjective system, so that creative acts are cocreated.

A philosophical position in support of intersubjective cocreativity was advanced by Buber (1996). He proposed that there are two word pairs that describe human existence: *I-It*, in which the It consists of the world of discrete and separate objects, which are used or experienced as such by the I; and *I-Thou*, a purely relational experience of being, in which there are no boundaries to delimit objects and therefore no objects. (In the following quotes, I have replaced the translator’s use of You with Thou, to reflect the more common translation of the original German.) As Buber wrote, “whoever says [Thou] does not have something; he has nothing. But he stands in relation” (p. 55), and “relation is reciprocity. My [Thou] acts on me as I act on it”

(p. 67). It is in relational existence that Buber believed humans experience spirit: “Spirit is not in the I but between I and [Thou]. . . . It is solely by virtue of his power to relate that man is able to live in the spirit” (p. 89). He defined God as the eternal Thou, and wrote that “extended, the lines of relationships intersect in the eternal [Thou]. Every single [Thou] is a glimpse of that” (p. 123), thus suggesting a direct link between embracing the I-Thou and spiritual growth. Writing about creativity, Buber said:

This is the eternal origin of art that a human being confronts a form that wants to become a work through him. Not a figment of his soul but something that appears to the soul and demands the soul’s creative power. What is required is a deed that a man does with his whole creative being: if he commits it and speaks with his being the basic word [I-Thou] to the form that appears then the creative power is released and the work comes into being. (p. 60)

Thus, for Buber, existence in the I-Thou allows for the experience of creativity, and since there is no subject–object dualism in this experience, creativity is cocreative and cannot be situated in the individual.

Phenomenology, a philosophical discipline founded by Husserl (1958), likewise offers support for cocreativity. It is concerned with the study of conscious experience, and the phenomena that appear in consciousness. A central tenet of Husserl’s approach was the idea of *intentionality*, that consciousness is always consciousness *of* something, that there is always an object to which consciousness is intending. Merleau-Ponty (1968) challenged this objectifying assumption, positing instead the idea of an interrelational, nondual phenomenon as the substrate of existence, which he named the *flesh*:

The flesh is not matter, is not mind, is not substance. To designate it, we should need the old term “element,” in the sense it was used to speak of water, air, earth, and fire, that is, in the sense of a *general thing*, midway between the spatio-temporal individual and the idea, a sort of incarnate principle that brings a style of being wherever there is a fragment of being. The flesh is in this sense an “element” of Being. (p. 139)

Abram (1996) described the flesh as “the mysterious tissue or matrix that underlies and gives rise to both the perceiver and the perceived as interdependent aspects of its spontaneous activity” (p. 66). Merleau-Ponty (1968) also used the term *chiasm* to refer to “the reciprocal insertion and intertwining of one in the other” (p. 138), wherein “there is not only a me–other rivalry, but a co-functioning. We function as one unique body” (Merleau-Ponty, 1968, p. 215). In this sense, all experience is cocreative, arising from the intertwining, the flesh, the chiasm, and “interresponsive coparticipation of our lived body with the rest of the world” (Adams, 2010, p. 31).

Ferrer’s (2002) participatory philosophy grew out of a critical examination of transpersonal theory and offers another theoretical position supporting the concept of intersubjectivity. He saw the transpersonal movement as having the worthy goal of “present[ing] cogent visions of human nature and reality that honor the increasing interest and hunger for a deeper spiritual connection in the context of the philosophical and scientific discourse of modernity” (p. XVII). However, he felt that it fell short of its promise due to three major limitations. The first was experientialism, whereby transpersonal and spiritual phenomena were conceptualized as being fundamentally inner experiences, leading to “intrasubjective reductionism” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 23). Second was inner empiricism, the insistence on the use of empirical methods and related standards associated with modernist scientific inquiry (replicability, falsifiability, verifiability, etc.) to validate internal spiritual knowledge, rather than using the “emancipatory power of self, relationships, and world” (Ferrer, 2002, p. 3) as the standard for validation. Third was a tacit assumption of the perennial philosophy (Huxley, 1945), or belief in a universal spiritual truth underlying the world’s many spiritual and religious traditions.

Participatory philosophy (Ferrer, 2002) purported to transcend these limitations of transpersonal theory. Ferrer (2002) observed that Cartesian thinking (Descartes, 1641) had led to situating the sacred as “other,” outside and dissociated from the individual, and that transpersonal theory had begun the return to a more holistic model wherein the sacred derives from a personal, spontaneous, vital connection with self, others, and the natural environment (Washburn, 1995). Building on this, and acknowledging the contribution of Buber (1996) in positing spirituality as deriving from human participation in an intersubjective relational dialogue, Ferrer offered a participatory vision in the form of:

*a turn from intrasubjective experience to participatory events in our understanding of transpersonal and spiritual phenomena. Transpersonal phenomena . . . can be more adequately conceived not as individual inner experiences, but as participatory events that can emerge in the locus of an individual, a relationship, a collective identity, or a place. . . . This participation engages human beings in the activity I call *participatory knowing*, that is, a multidimensional access to reality that can involve not only the creative power of the mind, but also of the body, the heart, and the soul. (pp. 2–3)*

He noted that participatory events were neither subjective nor objective and not attributable to any one individual. Ferrer thus posited the intertwining of creativity and intersubjective experience, as did Buber, Stolorow (1991), and Merleau-Ponty (1968).

Creativity and intersubjectivity. Creativity researchers have addressed the concepts of cocreativity and intersubjectivity in a number of ways. Socioculturally oriented researchers (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) incorporated collaboration into their models by including the field—those experts and institutions that act as gatekeepers to a domain of knowledge. Humanistic–existentialist researchers also viewed the creative process as relationally situated (May, 1975; Rogers, 1976). May (1975) wrote that “one can never localize creativity as a *subjective* phenomenon . . . what occurs is always a *process*, a *doing*—specifically a process interrelating the person and his or her world” (p. 50). For May, there was no such thing as a pure projection of inner material into a form of artistic expression, although a person’s

“subjective data” (p. 80) could certainly influence how the individual might act in the world.

Rather, creativity happened in the encounter with “the pattern of meaningful relations in which a person exists and in the design of which he or she participates” (May, 1975, p. 50), and is contextually bound and different in each instant. Moustakas (1977) noted that the creative process was “a pure form of self/other relatedness” (p. 28).

Intersubjective experience is also frequently referenced in discussions of the insight or illumination phase of the stage-sequential process model (Wallas, 1926). Getzels and Csikszentmihalyi (1976) wrote that “virtually all accounts of artistic creativity agree that it springs from a subconscious inner impulse” (p. 3). Csikszentmihalyi (1996) seemed to favor a cognitive explanation for insight, whereby, beneath the level of consciousness, the creative person’s brain continues to make associations among ideas that may ultimately yield a creative solution to a problem. Still, he noted the cocreative nature of insight, saying that “we must admit that even in the unconscious the symbol system and the social environment play important roles” (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996, p. 102). Sawyer (2012) concluded that the “aha” moment of insight resulted from many small insights, reflecting the internalization of the field and domain knowledge, so that an apparent subjective experience of sudden insight “in retrospect . . . can always be traced to the prior work that the creator was engaged in . . . [such that] each innovation resulted from a connected, directed, rational process” (p. 71). This again implies a cocreative experience of innovation, whereby field contributions are a part of the solution.

Group creativity. Sawyer (2003) observed that in certain group performances, such as improvisational theatre or jazz, the performance (process) *is* the product, and is clearly an outcome of the group members’ real-time interactions, which cannot be attributed to any one individual. Thus, he asserted that group creativity is separate from and not reducible to

individual creativity. In group creativity, “the performance emerges from individual action and interaction, and the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Sawyer, 2003, p. 73).

Classifying performance and group creative experience is a complex affair. Schechner (2003) constructed a typology to codify the many forms and functions of performance, which range from sports to ritualistic ceremonies. Sawyer (2003) noted the difficulty of trying to categorize improvisational performance, since even the performance of a scored, pre-rehearsed composition still depends in the moment on the interactions of the players, cannot be determined by a single individual, and will never be identical if the event is repeated. Even explicitly improvisational performances range in their degree of improvisationality, and Sawyer elaborated 11 contrast dimensions by which such a performance might be classified along the spectrum from ritualized to improvisational. To be successful, improvisational performance depends on structures, such as shared cultural knowledge and practices, while structured performances, like plays and concerts of Western art (classical) music, depend on improvisational interactions among ensemble members for their success (Sawyer, 2006). Furthermore, interactions between individuals resulting in creative performances can be synchronic (in the moment) or diachronic (preceding but ultimately influencing the performance; Sawyer, 2003). In both cases, the creative outcome is a function of these interactions and not attributable uniquely to the individual.

Sawyer (2003) defined group creativity as a “collaboratively emergent social process” (p. 78). He identified five key characteristics of group creativity, the essence of which is “interaction and communication among the performers” (p. 73): process, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication, and emergence. These may be understood as follows. The creative product is, in a sense, equivalent to the process of member interaction.

The outcome of the creative process in each moment is called the *emergent*. What emerges from the group process is greater than the sum of its parts. With multiple people participating in the process, each moment is highly overdetermined, since each person has a very wide range of possible responses or contributions from which to select based on the emergent. This overdeterminacy leads to unpredictability. Intersubjectivity, in the context of Sawyer's group creativity model, is defined according to Matusov (1996) as "a process of coordination of individual contributions to joint activity rather than as a state of agreement" (p. 34), such that "group creativity occurs on a collaborative, social plane, rather than in performer's [*sic*] heads" (Sawyer, 2003, p. 9). In order to negotiate this intersubjective experience, group members must be communicating while simultaneously enacting their performance, and in a way that further directs the process itself. This *metapragmatic* communication is highly complex.

Sawyer (2003) modeled the group creative process using interactional semiotics, with particular focus on improvisational performance:

Performers are loosely constrained to operate within the performance genre. A given act is more strongly constrained by the emergent. The nature of this constraint is unique and specific to the performance and the moment of interaction; . . . In response to the performer's action, the other participants evaluate the act. . . . This "evaluation" is often immediate and often not consciously goal-directed. (pp. 88–89)

Thus, Sawyer suggested that the stages of the Wallas (1926) process model may collapse in time. Further, where much of the Wallas model is considered to be a conscious process with the unconscious contributing to the insight stage, "in group creativity the nonconscious contribution is reported to be salient, continuous, and essential" (Sawyer, 2003, p. 68). Sawyer also extended Csikszentmihalyi's (1990) flow concept to the creative group. Group flow is a separate property from individual flow, and emerges when a group is performing at its peak, reflecting a high degree of group chemistry and interactional synchrony.

These perspectives from creativity researchers reinforce the psychological and philosophical theories described above to suggest that creativity may in fact be more appropriately thought of as *cocreativity*, such that intersubjective and collaborative experiences are an integral and persistent property of the creative process. Transpersonal experiences, which might also be considered examples of intersubjective *cocreativity*, are discussed in the sections on the subjective experience of songwriters and transformation later in this chapter.

Popular Songwriting as a Creative Process

The creative processes of songwriting and the recording and performing of original popular music have been studied by researchers from a range of disciplines, including ethnomusicology (Blacking, 1995; Gay, 1991; Lilliestam, 1996), psychology (Barba, 2005; Fornäs et al., 1995; Gay, 1991; Sawyer, 1999, 2008; Sena-Martinez, 2012), and music education (Biasutti, 2012; Dillon, 2007; Green, 2001). This section explores the findings and relates them to the research on the creative process presented above. It concludes with a discussion of the activities of recording and performing.

Barba (2005) and Sena-Martinez (2012) each conducted a qualitative study of singer-songwriters to learn about their subjective experience of songwriting and its transformative aspects. Their findings with regard to transformation will be discussed in a later section of this literature review. However, each of these researchers also reached conclusions about the creative process of songwriting, which are presented here. The results of Barba's data analysis of her interviews of eight singer-songwriters aged 20–40 were presented as “initial findings” (p. 52), and incorporated a range of themes. Some, such as *Right Conditions*, *The Role of Ego/Intellect*, and *Driving in My Car*, captured aspects of the creative process participants deemed important for fully accessing their creative potential, and reinforced some findings by

Csikszentmihalyi (1996) and Maslow (1968), with regard to flow and creativity. Others, such as *Source: The Giver of Song* and *Intentionality* were related to the way in which a song came into being. Barba noted that all her participants reported “qualities of mystery, unpredictability and/or a sense of ‘otherness’” (p. 53) when reflecting on the origins of songs, and that intent was important, attributed by some to themselves and by others to something outside themselves. These experiences of the process of inspiration or illumination will be seen to be very common among songwriters in the section on subjective experiences of songwriters below. *Collaboration* emerged as a theme, although this was only addressed by 2 participants. Quotes suggested they experienced group composition as discussed below with regard to songwriting in bands and as modeled by Sawyer (2003).

Sena-Martinez (2012) interviewed six songwriters to learn about songwriting and transformation, “3 of whom identified with their indigenous heritage, culture, customs, and traditions, and 3 [of whom] considered themselves to come from a Western perspective” (p. 57). Her content analysis of transcribed interviews led to the extraction of several themes that described conditions comparable to those experienced in flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), and conducive to creativity, in line with Barba’s (2005) findings. Her indigenously identified coresearchers saw song as “existing along a continuum in their ancestral lineage—past, present, future” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 143), and situated songwriting in the context of community, ritual, and ceremony. She reported that her Western-identified participants had more of an individual focus in terms of the process, although they also mentioned the positive experiences arising from sharing their songs. She found general support among both her subpopulations for the stage sequential models of creativity advanced by Wallas (1926) and Csikszentmihalyi (1996)—albeit with some iterative cycling through the steps—but noted that indigenously

identified songwriters had a different underlying rationale for their process, grounded in community and spirituality.

Many studies of songwriting in bands support Sawyer's (2003, 2006) model of group creativity, characterized by process, unpredictability, intersubjectivity, complex communication, and emergence. For example, Lilliestam (1996) studied the practices of rock musicians. His research revealed that collaborative composing was common:

Even if the most common practice in connection with rock is that composing is done by a single individual or possibly a pair, where one makes the music and the other the lyrics, it is also usual to make songs collectively. A band may improvise together and make songs out of "jams." Someone may come up with a basic idea that is elaborated by the members of the group. (p. 209)

The practice of *jamming* is a form of improvisation wherein a group of musicians play together without any goal or prior discussion, beyond agreement about a simple chord structure to follow or the introduction by one person of an initial "riff" of notes to start things off (Green, 2001). Green (2001) conducted a qualitative study of 14 musicians in the United Kingdom, aged 15–50 and engaged in "Anglo-American guitar-based pop and rock music" (p. 9). Her data was gathered through semi-structured interviews, listening to recordings, and observing live performances. She found that:

Group composition occurred, usually by having one or two main songwriters who would come to the rehearsal with ideas which were then embellished to varying degrees by the other band members, such that everyone to some extent, provides an original contribution to the finished product. (p. 80)

Through his ethnographic fieldwork study of a single rock band over 4 years, Gay (1991) developed a model for songwriting he called "composition as negotiation" (p. 202). This process involved the contribution of an initial idea by one or two members, or the development of an idea through jamming, which was then worked up by the group, with "each musician acting from roles as instrumentalists, singers, songwriters, arrangers, and so forth, and with each responsible

for certain aspects of the song” (p. 202). Similar collaborative songwriting practices were reported by Biasutti (2012), Davis (2005), Fornäs et al. (1995), and Campbell (1995), who noted that writing songs in a band “fits somewhere . . . between an individual and personal activity and a collective group procedure” (p. 18). Vakeva (2010) found that some musicians are now taking advantage of Internet connectivity to do “collective songwriting online” (p. 63). He noted that this technical infrastructure allows for music works to be seen as global “emergent communal processes” (p. 61), shifting the focus from product to process, and from individual expression to communication. This observation also strongly reflects Sawyer’s (2003) group creativity model. In summary, academic research on the songwriting process appears to validate the key elements of both stage-sequential creative process models (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Wallas, 1926) and the group creativity model put forward by Sawyer (2003).

Recording and performing. Several authors have debated whether composition, recording, and performance of music should be viewed as creative products or creative processes, and the extent to which these activities may be seen as distinct (Cook, 2001; Lawson, 2002; Sawyer, 2003; Sloboda, 1985; Vakeva, 2010). Sawyer (2012) noted that while composition produces a product, such as a studio recording or score, performance concerns process. Blau (2008), likewise, insisted that performance be viewed as a contextual process, “no longer deny[ing] the place and role, within music, of both the performer and of the listener, unequivocally casting music as an holistic phenomenon, as an event” (p. 9). Others have examined the blurring between the processes of composition and performance. For example, a composition developed prior to performance and not notated may be conceptualized as a “script” (Schechner, 2003, p. 68) used to support the contextual unfolding or rendition of a piece of music (Blau, 2008; Cook, 2001; Schechner, 2003), such that the interaction between live

performers and the audience cocreates an original instance of that work in that moment (Lawson, 2002). Cook (2001) concluded that “process and product, then, are not so much alternative options as complementary strands of the twisted braid we call performance” (para. 20). Several authors have focused on the social psychology and group dynamics of performance. Davidson (1997) noted the importance of affiliation (Douglas, 1993) for members of a musical ensemble to collaborate effectively, a point reinforced by Doğantan-Dack (2012), who added that trust and mutual support were also necessary ingredients, and that the

chemistry of an ensemble in live performance is different from the group dynamics experienced during rehearsals. Live performance is the site where the trust and support between the co-performers get tested, confirmed and re-confirmed, and acquire their true practical meaning; the willingness and the ability to create an emotional comfort zone during the live event when co-performers need it is crucial for the success of the performance. (pp. 43–44)

Sawyer (2003) similarly noted that performance creativity depends on “an intangible chemistry between the members of the group” (p. 4). Davidson and Salgado Correia (2001) stated that “authentic” performances are those in which “‘becoming’ occurs . . . where the performers, exploring their metaphorical projections, end up reaching the bodily patterns of physical experience which, at a deep level, connect with or ‘meet’ the individual listeners” (p. 80). Clarke (2005) discussed performance creativity as taking place “at the interface between socially constructed musical materials and performance practices, the possibilities and constraints of the human body and instruments with which it interacts, and the perceptual, motor and cognitive skills of individual performers” (p. 176), and lamented the lack of research into the relationships between performers and the audience as a component of performance.

There are equally perplexing challenges with delineating the unique characteristics and interrelationship of recording and performance. Gay (1991), writing over 20 years ago on rock bands, concluded that the “ultimate aim of this compositional form [of evolving songs as a band

in rehearsals] is a later performance by the group” (pp. 203–204). With the enormous advances in recording capabilities made possible by digitization, and the more recent possibilities for rapid diffusion of recordings via the Internet, popular musicians may no longer be so focused on live performance (Vakeva, 2010).

Technological innovation has caused significant shifts in the relationship between recordings and live performances (Auslander, 2008). Auslander (2008) observed that the *mediatization* of performance, whereby performance is “circulated on television, as audio or video recordings, and in other forms based in technologies of reproduction” (p. 4), has led to “the progressive diminution of previous distinctions between the live and the mediatized, in which live events are becoming ever more like mediatized ones” (p. 7). He argued that *liveness* as a concept has been historically contingent, evolving from physical copresence of performers and audience and temporal simultaneity (e.g., the “classic” definition of concerts); to a “live recording” available on compact disks and other physical media, which has an asynchronous temporal relationship between production and consumption; to Internet liveness, which is based on virtual copresence.

Digital recording technology has also increased the complexity of recording. Becker (1982) defined an *art world* as “consist[ing] of all the people whose activities are necessary to the production of the characteristic works which that world, and perhaps others as well, define as art” (p. 34). He observed that “sound mixing, once a mere technical specialty, [has] become integral to the art process and recognized as such” (p. 18). For a musical recording, the art world may include managers, producers, technicians, artist and repertoire (A&R) staff, and session musicians, as well as the artists to whom the work is attributed (Becker, 1982; Cook, 2001; Gay, 1991; Sawyer, 2012). Recording is thus a group creative activity and product.

Subjective experiences of songwriting. Since popular music is by definition appealing to a broad swath of the population, it is not surprising to find extensive treatment of songwriting in the popular media. In this section, I present the perspectives of professional songwriters, drawn from nonacademic sources.

Four individuals with access to some of the most well-known professional songwriter-musicians of the last couple of decades have published books on songwriting and the creative process, based on interviews with famous musicians (Boyd, 1992; Flanagan, 1986; Nash, 2002; Zollo, 2003). Boyd (1992), a psychologist who was formerly married to Mick Fleetwood of the band Fleetwood Mac, conducted a qualitative study of 75 famous professional musicians, which she published in a book intended for nonacademic readers. The book is a blend of scholastic inquiry and the author's personal opinions. There is limited description of her method. It is unclear, for example, whether the large number of themes presented in each chapter emerged from a formal thematic analysis, and whether she took an inductive or deductive approach (although the latter seems likely). Her research questions concerned how individuals who were not "musical geniuses" had come to lead creative lives equal to those of geniuses and how their ability to create had enriched their lives. However, Boyd described neither how she determined whether individuals were geniuses nor how participants were recruited or selected. She had a particular interest in songwriters' views about creativity and spirituality and whether they had had peak experiences (Maslow, 1964). Her interview protocol consisted of 30 questions, and covered early experiences of learning music and the role of music in the participant's family of origin; spiritual beliefs and views about creativity and spirituality; experiences with substance use and creativity; the creative process; and peak experiences. Many of the questions were closed-ended ("Did any of your music ever feel mystically inspired?"; Boyd, 1992, p. 270) or

contained strong biases (“Would you say the closest thing to a spiritual experience is when you’re singing, playing your instrument, or composing?”; Boyd, 1992, p. 270). These shortcomings in the construction of the protocol, coupled with the lack of methodological clarity and explicit procedures to address researcher bias, mean that findings should be treated with caution. Nonetheless, quotations cited from her interviews shed light on the creative process of songwriters from a subjective perspective, and offer support for aspects of the creativity models presented earlier.

Many of Boyd’s (1992) participants described experiences that support the idea of an illumination (or insight) phase of the Wallas (1926) stage sequential creative process model, with several musicians differentiating between songs that required substantial effort to develop and those that seemed to spring forth nearly completely formed. Most also noted that the latter were unusual experiences that had only happened a few times in their songwriting career, and tended to attribute this experience to something deeply unconscious and/or transpersonal. For example, David Crosby (of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young; as cited in Boyd, 1992) said:

Many of my best songs come out all in one blurt, and at those times I have the distinct feeling that this level of me is just a vehicle for some other level of me that has been sitting there cooking this thing up. (p. 81)

Don Henley (of The Eagles; as cited in Boyd, 1992) talked about the feeling that “something is being given to you from somewhere else, or it’s coming through you” (p. 82), and said that this was rare for him. Christine McVie (of Fleetwood Mac; as cited in Boyd, 1992) said: “Some songs I write I’m convinced don’t come from me. . . . Many times it feels like it comes from some other source” (p. 88). Nancy Wilson (of Heart; as cited in Boyd, 1992) said:

There are those magical times when it seems to pour right through you. That’s the most incredible feeling I can imagine as far as songwriting. You’re like the vessel or the instrument itself that somebody’s playing. . . . I don’t have a specific name for it; there’s a lot of names: Buddha, God, inspiration. (p. 99)

Robin Horn (session drummer for Linda Ronstadt and others; as cited in Boyd, 1992) noted that “sometimes something pops out that I’ve never heard before, and that’s probably the closest thing to having a mystical experience” (p. 98). Others felt that their best songs originated from these kinds of experiences, as when Graham Nash (of Crosby, Stills, Nash, and Young; as cited in Boyd, 1992) said:

With some of my best songs, I can’t remember the state I was in when I wrote them. It’s kind of like I go into a void: it’s very still. Time goes very quickly. It’s like a suspension where one moment will last for an hour. . . . I have no memory of writing the songs, but it’s [*sic*] in my handwriting so I know I wrote them—as to where that comes from, I have no idea. . . . [it] makes me believe in an external power that I’m tapping into, that a channel is opening up. (p. 85)

It is interesting to note qualities of the flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) present in this description by Nash of his songwriting inspiration. Bernie Larson (songwriter and guitarist with Melissa Etheridge; as cited in Boyd, 1992) also noted this as well, even evoking the term flow:

When I am writing I have a rhythm or a flow, and it’s like speaking in tongues. The flow starts happening, and I believe it’s connected to a rhythm of life. And it’s going on subconsciously. . . . Eight hours can go by just like that. . . . But there’s no deliberate effort to do it. (p. 95)

Flanagan’s (1986) book of interviews with well-known songwriter-musicians further reinforced these experiences. The explicit objective of the book is never stated but may be inferred from its subtitle, *Rock’s Great Songwriters Talk About Creating Their Music*. His criteria for inclusion were that the songwriter’s work needed to be “out of the rock tradition anteceded by Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly” (Flanagan, 1986, p. 1), that his or her songs could be represented on acoustic guitar without losing their impact, and that the artist had recorded at least four albums. There appeared to be no formal interview protocol, and the questions asked varied widely, based on the particular musician’s background and music. Despite the nonacademic nature of this book, the famous musicians quoted offered rich descriptions of their subjective experience of songwriting. His interviews also revealed that songwriters frequently

experienced songs coming fully formed. For example, Neil Young (as cited in Flanagan, 1986) noted that:

Sometimes when I'm writing a song I can feel there's other things in me that are not me. That's why I hesitate to edit my songs. If it's something I have to think about and contrive, work at, it's usually not that good. My best work just comes through me. A lot of times what comes through me is coming from somewhere else. (p. 124)

Tom Petty (as cited in Flanagan, 1986) said, "I didn't think about it when I was writing it. It's one of those that just came in very quickly almost word for word, in minutes" (p. 44). Not all songwriters agree that illumination involves a transpersonal experience, as can be seen from Pete Townshend's (as cited in Flanagan, 1986) view:

I'm pretty angry about the use of the word *inspiration*. . . . Inspiration implies that something is coming from above and flowing through you. But ideas for songs come from an *inner* thing. You have to need to share, to communicate for some reason. What you write comes from what you see and do. It doesn't come from space. (p. 163)

Musicians described transpersonal and spiritual experiences, peak experiences (Maslow, 1964), and flow-like states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990; Sawyer, 2003) when talking about performing, although their use of language varied widely. For example, singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell (as cited in Boyd, 1992) spoke of experiencing the state of "Zen no mind" (p. 86) in performance, in which "ego is the afterthought" (p. 86). Keith Strickland (as cited in Boyd, 1992) of the B-52's said that "When things are going really well on-stage, it's almost like a meditation" (p. 97). Singer Graham Bell (as cited in Boyd, 1992) said, "When I'm playing onstage and I reach that flow, that's all I am—the music" (p. 161). Peter Frampton (as cited in Boyd, 1992) said, "Knowing how I feel onstage and when I communicate that feeling to the whole audience, it starts to become a sort of emotional feedback. I become totally uninhibited" (p. 126). Nancy Wilson (as cited in Boyd, 1992) of Heart commented that "You really feel truly larger than yourself, like you're ten thousand feet high. You're kind of yourself, but you're also in the audience, so it's like some kind of circular reciprocity" (p. 182). Ringo Starr (as cited in

Boyd, 1992) of The Beatles said, “Sometimes . . . you would feel this presence together with the audience and the band, which was just such a mindblower . . . you felt that you and the audience were actually one” (p. 183).

This section reviewed the literature related to the processes of composing, recording, and performing original popular songs, situated within the broader models of creativity research presented earlier in the chapter. The subjective experiences of songwriters with regard to the creative process were also discussed. Since this research project was concerned with transformative experiences that might arise from songwriting, transformation is the subject of the final section of this literature review.

Transformation

Our songs come from the power of being, the source of unique potential and strength that exists within each of us. When we speak to our powers, when we affirm them, then they know we are telling them something. There is an awakening, a response, a return of life. Our powers hear our own songs; they want to listen. If you don’t sing your own songs, if you don’t play your own music and speak your own words, if you don’t live your own silences, then the powers within you will not know where to find you. They will not know how to work for you. (Moustakas, 1977, pp. 29–30)

Although Moustakas (1977) was writing metaphorically about finding and expressing one’s voice rather than of the practice of songwriting, the quote above reflects the views of many songwriters, researchers, and music therapists that voicing one’s original songs holds great power for personal healing, development, and transformation. In my research, I applied two lenses to examine transformation as a result of creating and sharing original songs: (a) models of psychospiritual development drawn from transpersonal psychology, and (b) models of transformation through expressive arts practices. Research on the use of songwriting in clinical settings also offers support for the view that songwriting may be transformative and is reviewed in the final part of this section.

Transpersonal theories of development. The first lens I employed to assess transformation in participants was that of transpersonal models of development. Transpersonal psychology was defined in chapter 1. While it is beyond the scope of this literature review to detail the field of developmental psychology, it is important to differentiate transpersonal models of development from conventional ones and to relate them to the research question.

The academic discipline of developmental psychology studies age-related changes in physical, cognitive, emotional, moral, and social functioning of the human personality across the lifespan from birth to death. Cunningham (2012) noted the ways in which transpersonal models of development differ from conventional models: “Transpersonal development includes a spiritual dimension in human personality functioning, employs a whole person approach, emphasizes the role that awareness plays in development and the importance of questions of value, meaning, and purpose” (p. 10). He added that the role of consciousness is central to transpersonal models of development, including nonordinary or altered states of consciousness, and whole-body, intuitive knowing not readily expressed through symbols or words.

The vast majority of models divide the developmental process into sequential stages, based on how the particular developmental variable under consideration evolves over time. This is observed in staged models of cognition (Piaget, 1995), morality (Kohlberg, 1981), sexuality (Freud, 1975), and personality (Erikson, 1980). Stage theories share three assumptions: (a) that the stage order is invariant, (b) that an individual must proceed through each stage before moving to the next and cannot skip stages, and (c) behaviors or qualities at each stage are qualitatively different from those in other stages. A notable example of a stage sequential model of transpersonal development was created by Wilber (1980a). In his structural model, Wilber (1999) posited that consciousness evolved in stages from “matter to body to mind to soul to

spirit” (p. 34), following a *Great Chain of Being*, with the lowest link in the chain being that of matter, and the highest, spirit. He defined development as “a dynamic process of hierarchically moving through those stages, in such a way that each stage of consciousness becomes a level of consciousness in subsequent development” (Wilber, 1999, p. 34). Transpersonal or spiritual experience of consciousness is associated with the higher levels in Wilber’s (1980a) model, transcending egoic development, with the highest potential level of self-actualization representing “superconsciousness itself (Buddha-nature, Atman-nature, Spirit, God-consciousness . . .)” (Wilber, 1999, p. 35).

Influenced by Wilber’s (1980a) structural model and other transpersonal thinkers, such as Jung (1969), Assagioli (1993), Grof (1988), and Maslow (1968), Washburn (1995) created a comprehensive, transpersonal theory of human psychospiritual development. He rejected the linear, stage-sequential approach in favor of a staged model that followed a spiral trajectory over time, arising from a

dynamic–dialectical paradigm . . . based on a bipolar conception of the psyche, [with] triphasic development . . . proceeding by way of a dialectical interplay between the two psychic poles. One of these poles is the seat of the ego, the other the seat of the Dynamic Ground. (Washburn, 1995, p. 10)

Washburn (1995) defined the *Dynamic Ground* as the “energy, power, spirit” (p. 4) that is the dynamic source of life. He saw both the psychic and the spiritual as expressions of the Dynamic Ground, thus arising from the same source. The three phases in his model are (a) the preegoic, associated with prelatency, also called the *body ego*, due to its strongly somatic quality; (b) the egoic, associated with a large portion of the life cycle following prelatency, also called the *mental ego*, due to its dissociation from physical and instinctual life; and (c) the transegoic, commonly experienced in later life although not necessarily attained by all, and also called *integration*.

Development occurs through a shifting relationship between the ego and the Dynamic Ground. In the preegoic stage, the ego is weak and undeveloped, and the child will likely experience the Dynamic Ground as strong and overpowering. In the egoic stage, a repressive infrastructure has developed to insulate the mental ego from the “deep unconscious and therefore from the Dynamic Ground” (Washburn, 1995, p. 6). Two subprocesses may take place to allow a person to develop from the egoic to the transegoic stage, resulting in integration of a strong and mature ego with the Dynamic Ground; psychospiritual transformation occurs as a result of these processes. The first is “regression in the service of transcendence” (Washburn, 1995, p. 7), and is frequently initiated by awareness of a lack of fulfillment and a sense of alienation or emptiness. This may lead to a difficult period of “dying to the world” (Washburn, 1995, p. 172), encountering the *shadow* (Jung, 1969), dissolving repressive mechanisms, and a possible spiritual awakening as the ego “returns to the deepest inner source of its being [the Dynamic Ground]” (Washburn, 1995, p. 21). The second process is “regeneration in spirit” (Washburn, 1995, p. 7), wherein “the ego, now rooted in the Ground, begins to be infused and redemptively transformed by the power of the Ground” (Washburn, 1995, pp. 21–22). Thus, at the simplest level, this model consists of a spiraling movement through the three stages as a “departure (thesis), return (antithesis), and higher integration (synthesis)” (Washburn, 1995, p. 7) of the ego with respect to the Dynamic Ground. Although sequential in time, the stages are neither hierarchical, as in Wilber’s (1980a) model, nor linear (since they involve a spiral path).

Psychospiritual development in this model involves a surfacing of unconscious material. Drawing from Jungian (1969) theory, Washburn (1995) elaborated his own model of the unconscious, with three levels. At the deepest, prepersonal level of the unconscious, all components are repressed, and these include the Dynamic Ground, the instinctual–archetypal

unconscious (analogous to Jung's collective unconscious; Jung, 1969), and the body unconscious. The personal unconscious level corresponds roughly to Jung's concept of the same name. If an individual undergoes a shift from egoic to transegoic states then the repression associated with the prepersonal and personal unconscious is lifted, reconnection with the Dynamic Ground occurs, and the "nonegoic pole becomes a wellspring of higher life rather than a dark and threatening submerged realm" (Washburn, 1995, p. 152).

Washburn's (1995) model, like other transpersonal developmental models, has the advantage of offering a more holistic view of human development and transformation. It integrates spirituality and psychology, while moving away from the Cartesian mind-body split. This allows for growth that comes from whole-body experiences that cannot be defined in purely cognitive terms and whose origins may be difficult to express in symbolic terms at all. Thus, it may be used to understand transformative experiences that go beyond the single-variable domains of conventional developmental models, such as those identified above relating to sexuality, morality, personality, or cognition. Another benefit is that the model integrates and builds on Jungian (Jung, 1969) depth psychology, allowing more conventional psychological growth involving the development of the ego and the identification and dismantling of repressive or dysfunctional mechanisms in the psyche to be situated within the context of broader psychospiritual development. Stages are not tied to age.

Compared with other transpersonal developmental models, Washburn's (1995) model has a number of strengths. Its triphasic, spiral-based path is simple to comprehend, and avoids a number of problems with a hierarchical conception of development, which is a notable feature of the most commonly cited, competing transpersonal model (Wilber, 1980a). In particular, hierarchical models of psychospiritual growth have been criticized for implying a value

judgment that those deemed to be operating at a higher level on the hierarchy are superior (Rothberg, 1986). They may also tend to devalue “‘lower levels’ of the psyche, such as the body, the emotions, and sexuality” (Frager, 1989, p. 300), as well as the cultures of those tribal or rural societies that emphasize the physical and the feminine over the intellectual and the masculine.

The most significant weakness of the Washburn (1995) model is its treatment of ego development. Wilber (1995b) critiqued Washburn’s (1995) spiral-dynamic model as falling prey to the so-called *pre/trans fallacy* (Wilber, 1980b), that is, of confusing earlier, developmental, infantile states of fusion with higher developmental states of psychospiritual functioning. Washburn (2003b) contested this, explaining that “some psychic resources that normally emerge in prepersonal [preegoic] stages of development, although limited to pre expressions early in life, are capable of trans expressions later in life” (p. 8). However, he conceded that not all psychic resources early in life may have potential for expression in the transpersonal (transegoic) stage. He differentiated between *dynamic potentials* (the body as sensorium, energy, bioinstinctuality, embodied affect, and creative imagination) and ego functions (synthesis, reality testing, discursive-organizing cognition, impulse control, intentional action, and ego defense). Dynamic potentials are essentially independent of the ego and spontaneous, and may be active in either pre or trans contexts. As an example, the dynamic potential of the affective response of love may be expressed in both pre and trans states, as “pre attachment love and trans compassionate love” (Washburn, 2003b, p. 14). Ego functions tend to follow a more hierarchical process of integration, in which the prior stage of development is transcended to offer more function, yet includes the prior structures. Washburn (2003b) acknowledged a weakness of the spiral-dynamic model in its accounting for the development of positive and higher ego functions when

compared with Wilber's (1980a) hierarchical model, but noted the superiority of his own model for representing dynamic potentials.

I selected the Washburn (1995) model in support of my inquiry into psychospiritual transformation of songwriters because it is more oriented to what Daniels (2005) characterized as *descending* or *pre-axial* historical-cultural traditions with regard to transpersonal or spiritual transformation. Such traditions had "no understanding of individual salvation separate from that of the community as a whole" (Daniels, 2005, p. 27) and operated with a philosophy based on the "interpenetration of the spiritual and natural worlds" (Daniels, 2005, p. 27), sometimes referred to as the "Great Circle or Web of Being" (Daniels, 2005, p. 27). Washburn's emphasis on the transformative power of connecting with the Dynamic Ground—the omnipresent life force that animates us—as the source for psychospiritual development resonates strongly with this philosophical orientation. Pre-axial philosophies emphasize the body, the heart, immanence, relationship, connection, and the unconscious (Daniels, 2005). Music-making is an embodied practice, and as discussed in the earlier section on intersubjectivity, the songwriting process can be argued to be inherently cocreative. Transformative experiences from songwriting seemed to me better aligned with and better understood with the aid of the pre-axial model offered by Washburn (1995) than, for example, Wilber's (1980a) post-axial, hierarchical model, which is associated more with qualities of the head, consciousness, reason, solitariness, and independence (Daniels, 2005).

Despite the pre-axial orientation of the Washburn (1995) model, it is not fully encompassing of an intersubjective view of the human developmental journey. Ferrer (2002) noted this very point in his critique of transpersonal theories. As was discussed earlier, he found transpersonal thinking to be flawed in its emphasis on individual inner experience and he noted

that Washburn's (1995) model exemplified this bias. Because I did not know at the outset how participants in my study might conceptualize and report their experiences of transformation through songwriting, I chose to supplement my developmental framework with a second model deeply rooted in cocreativity—that of Ferrer's (2002, 2011) participatory philosophy, which was introduced earlier in this chapter. This afforded the option of examining participants' experiences from either a more individually oriented or a more intersubjectively oriented perspective, guided by what was observed in the data.

Ferrer (2002) based his philosophical framework on a “revisioning” of transpersonal theory, a discipline that had its roots in an intent to synthesize spiritual and psychological perspectives to offer a holistic understanding of human nature (Washburn, 1995; Wilber, 1995a). He suggested that “human spirituality emerges from cocreative participation [which he called *enaction*] in an always dynamic and undetermined mystery, spiritual power, and/or creative energy of life or reality” (Ferrer, 2008, p. 136). Spiritual knowing occurs through *participatory events*,

which may involve individual intentions and dispositions; the creative power of multidimensional human cognition; cultural, religious, and historical horizons; archetypal and subtle energies; and, perhaps crucially, the apparently inexhaustible creativity of a dynamic and undetermined spiritual energy or generative power of life. (Ferrer, 2008, p. 137)

For Ferrer (2008), “participation in a spiritual event usually brings forth transformation of the self and, at times, of the world” (p. 137): Thus, cocreativity is the source of psychospiritual transformation. In a recent retrospective on the impact of his model, Ferrer (2011) clarified that spiritual cocreation has three interrelated dimensions: intrapersonal cocreation, which involves all human attributes of body, mind, and heart; interpersonal cocreation, which “emerges from cooperative relationships among human beings growing as peers” (p. 3); and transpersonal

cocreation, which is the “dynamic interaction between embodied human beings and the mystery in the bringing forth of spiritual insights, practices, states, and worlds” (p. 4).

Ferrer’s (2002) interest appears to have been focused more on the spiritual aspects of transpersonal theory than on the psychological aspects (to the extent that these can be viewed as separate, a debatable point) and he did not present his model explicitly as a developmental model so much as a model of spirituality that might resolve longstanding inconsistencies and flaws in transpersonal thinking. For the purposes of this study, participatory philosophy is viewed through the lens of psychospiritual development, because of its implicit inclusion of the holistic view of the human journey espoused by transpersonalists. Ferrer (2008) elucidated several qualities of participatory events, the first of which was the multidimensional nature of knowledge attained:

Participatory knowing refers to a multidimensional access to reality that includes not only the intellectual knowing of the mind, but also the emotional and emphatic knowing of the heart, the sensual and somatic knowing of the body, the visionary and intuitive knowing of the soul, as well as any other way of knowing available to human beings. (p. 121)

Such mind–body–spirit integration is characteristic of transpersonal views of psychospiritual development.

Ferrer’s (2002) model dispensed with the dualistic remnants of Cartesian thinking, which have subtly infused transpersonal theory, through his reconceptualization of transpersonal phenomena not as individual experiences but as events in participatory consciousness. A positive attribute of the model is its emancipatory orientation. The rejection of perennialism in favor of a pluralistic conception of spirituality offers the possibility of freedom from prior hierarchical rankings of spiritual insights and axiological value judgments about individuals’ spiritual development, since in a pluralistic worldview there is no spiritual ultimate against which to make such judgments (Jaenke, 2004). Spiritual power and truth is instead validated through

the extent to which individuals, communities, and cultures are liberated from limiting self-centeredness and move toward selfless awareness and action, as measured by the absence of egocentrism, dissociation, and negative eco–socio–political impact (Ferrer, 2011). For the individual, this model supports authentic self-expression in psychospiritual development. It does not create precise categories for states and stages of development, but rather allows people to begin their psychospiritual journey from within whichever existential place they find themselves and without a rigid developmental map (Paulson, 2008), simply through opening to the participatory nature of being. However, Ferrer (2011) noted the importance of differentiating spiritual individuation, which is identified by “radical relatedness” (p. 5) and connection in community, from modern individualism, which he characterized as alienated, dissociated, and narcissistic. An advantage of this model with respect to my study was its clear embrace of intersubjective experience as central to transformation, given the evidence for cocreative experiences in the songwriting process.

However, the model initially fell short of fully embracing the implications of the cocreativity of experience. Unlike Buber (1996) and Merleau-Ponty (1968), who saw humans as intersubjectively engaged with the larger organism of life, Ferrer (2002) initially retained an anthropocentric view of the dualism of spirit and matter in his work. Although he appeared to favor the pre-axial, descending orientation to spiritual development, with its emphasis on the “interpenetration of the spiritual and natural worlds” (Daniels, 2005, p. 27), Ferrer (2002) nonetheless ignored the implication that embodied, participatory knowing suggests that all matter may in fact be imbued with spiritual energy. Ferrer (2011) later amended his model by making explicit reference to the possibility that interpersonal cocreation could include “contact with perceived nonhuman intelligences, such as subtle entities, natural powers, or archetypal forces

that might be embedded in psyche, nature, or the cosmos” (p. 3). Daniels (2009) also revised his designation of participatory philosophy, saying that it might be considered to be neither ascending nor descending but *extending*, through “expansion of the boundaries of moral and spiritual concern outwards, from a purely self-referential stance to one that encompasses other people and the larger political, economic and ecological systems” (p. 95). Such amendments to the conceptualization of participatory philosophy allowing for a wider range of transformative experiences made this model more desirable for this research, because the study’s participants’ experiences of transformation were an unknown. An additional weakness of the model is that it does not attempt to explain how cocreativity occurs; however, this was not a main thrust of the research, which was concerned with the outcomes of such experiences.

Ferrer’s (2002) participatory philosophy and Washburn’s (1995) spiral-dynamic model of psychospiritual development were used as the first theoretical framework by which to assess the findings of the study with regard to participants’ reported experiences of change in themselves and their lives. The second lens I selected through which to view the results was that of the transformative possibilities afforded by expressive arts practices.

Transformation and the arts. Expressive arts researchers, practitioners, and therapists believe that art transforms and heals. Through welcoming and attending to the *images*—artistic representations in any modality, such as dance, music, visual art, or theatre—that come through us in art-making, we learn about our deepest selves, because “art is a way of knowing what it is we actually believe” (Allen, 1995, p. 3). Allen (1995), an art therapist, explained that the expression of art is inherently transformative:

Making the image and living with it, with no other intervention, no assessment, no interpretation, catalyzes change and movement. When the image isn’t squashed down in the closet, life returns to flow through it. Attention honors the image and begins the process of reclaiming whatever it represents. (pp. 197–198)

McNiff (2004), who has a background in depth psychotherapy and art therapy, shared the view that creative expression directs energy and attention to the path of healing and transformation:

I have consistently discovered that the core process of healing through art involves the cultivation and release of the creative spirit. If we can liberate the creative process in our lives, it will always find the way to whatever needs attention and transformation. (p. 5)

Grey (1998), a visual artist, echoed this perspective. It is the liberation and artistic expression of the impetus to create that allows for transformation: “Although creative energy may be expressing itself destructively, it is inherently positive and can return to its causal, life-affirming nature through the transformative power of art” (p. 199).

How does art transform? Knill, Levine, and Levine (2005) invoked the term *poeisis* (Greek for *art-making*) to describe “the basic human capacity of shaping . . . that forms both world and self” (p. 16). The artist accepts the given of a situation or experience, “a chaos of meanings which demands assistance in order to come-into-form” (Knill, Levine, & Levine, 2005, p. 40), surrendering to the process of art-making and the unknown, “a letting-be” (Knill et al., 2005, p. 41). Entering into a transpersonal state of stepping beyond his or her ego, a giving-up of control, the role of the artist in *poeisis* is “not to impose a pre-existing form upon senseless matter but to allow the material to find its own sense” (Knill et al., 2005, p. 40).

Knill et al. (2005) noted that this transpersonal state of encounter in *poeisis* has much in common with the liminal state in ritual processes (Turner, 1969; van Gennep, 1960). Van Gennep’s (1960) three-stage model of societal rites of passage comprised a preliminal stage of the initiand’s separation or metaphorical death and leaving-behind of his or her previous identity; a liminal phase of transition, in which he or she undergoes a rite, passing metaphorically over the threshold (*limen* in Latin) from the old to the new; and a postliminal stage of reintegration into society with a new identity. In van Gennep’s terms, the individual returns to the prior structure of the society, albeit with changed status, whereas for Turner and Turner (1978), the liminal

phase holds potential for transformation of the system: “Liminality is not only *transition* but also *potentiality*, not only ‘going to be’ but also ‘what may be’” (p. 3). In liminality, the chaos of the unknown is transformed into something new through the encounter, just as poesis leads to “the transformation of [the pre-existing] reality in accordance with the possibilities that emerge through our encounters with it” (Knill et al., 2005, p. 71).

Dissanayake (1992) also explored the connection between ritual and art-making. She argued, from an ethnographic, Darwinian perspective, that art-making for humans is a universal (inherited) behavioral tendency, with the implication that “in the evolution of the human species, art-inclined individuals, those who possessed this behavior of art, survived better than those who did not” (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 35). She suggested that it is not the art per se but the “making special” (p. 42) that is the evolutionarily important aspect of the behavior of art, linking this to actions undertaken in the face of uncertainty and threat to survival: “At some point in their evolution, humans began deliberately to set out to make things special or extra-ordinary, perhaps for the purpose of influencing the outcome of important events . . . requiring action beyond simple fight or flight” (p. 51). Dissanayake noted that cultural rituals have served to create an intentional context for making things special, in situations having importance for the species or its survival, or to mark transitions. Invoking Turner’s (1969) concept of liminality, she noted that:

A person’s being or consciousness also may be transformed through ceremonial rites of passage, so that he or she moves from a prior natural or neutral state through a “liminal” phase outside ordinary social life and then back to social reintegration in the new . . . state. (Dissanayake, 1992, p. 69)

Art-making is generally present in many rituals, a way of making special, of marking the extraordinary nature of the ritual and transition, and thus integral to the transformation experienced in liminality.

Crowe (2005), a music therapist, conceptualized the artistic practice of music-making as a dynamic, complex system (Shulman, 1997), one property of which is deterministic chaos. Through iterative feedback, complex systems adapt and self-regulate so that order and form emerge from the chaos. Like Knill et al. (2005), Crowe evoked the term *poiesis* in describing this process:

The self-creation of complex adaptive systems is known as *autopoiesis*. An autopoietic system's primary function is to re-create itself continuously. Such systems do not simply maintain stasis when confronted by changing external conditions but, rather, dynamically re-create themselves. (p. 45)

Bifurcations—"new avenues of movement" (p. 34)—occur in complex systems as a result of their dynamics. A bifurcation is a "new path, a new way of life" (p. 35), giving rise to transformation in the system. Crowe also referenced liminality (Turner, 1969) and rituals in music-making, drawing a parallel between the liminal state and the edge-of-chaos state typifying complex systems like music:

Rituals create a special environment, a time and place outside the ordinary. It is this liminal or edge-of-chaos place and time that leads to transformation. In rituals the loosening of boundaries and the creation of liminal space allow for the emergence of new ways of being, new self-organization. (Crowe, 2005, p. 320)

Allen (1995) echoed this view of how art-making transforms: "Making images is a way of breaking boundaries, loosening outworn ideas, and making way for the new" (p. x).

Many of those writing about the transformative power of art-making are also clinicians, concerned with the therapeutic value of the practice (Allen, 1995; Crowe, 2005; Knill et al., 2005; McNiff, 2004). McNiff (2000) defined art therapy as a "'process' that corresponds to the universal forces of creation" (p. 252). He likened the practice of creating art to healing: "The transformative energy of art corresponds to, and possibly is, the energy of healing" (McNiff, 1989, p. 42). Referencing shamanic practices of healing (Eliade, 1972), which are based upon ancient indigenous traditions that see all beings as mutually interconnected, McNiff (2000) noted

that art therapy might be considered a modern-day manifestation of these ancient healing modes, in the ways in which it “‘makes whole,’ restores vitality, and transforms conflicts and troublesome conditions into affirmation of life” (McNiff, 2000, p. 252).

Art heals by allowing the artist to enter into the liminal state, with its chaotic unmooring from the known, to begin to evolve new possibilities. Crowe (2005) explained that music therapy can stimulate aesthetic reactions, mental images, and emotions that can lead to bifurcation, a new path for the individual:

In a liminal edge-of-chaos state, all possibilities exist, yet none has manifested. It is a state of optimal creativity. In psychological development, it reflects a new maturational window. If successful imprinting occurs during this liminal state, the individual can return to the social world with new energies and a new role. (p. 285)

McNiff (2004), also referencing chaos theory and the importance of accepting necessary destruction to arrive at a new level of functioning, pointed to the significance of imagination in the chaotic phase: “Art heals by activating the medicines of the creative imagination” (p. 221). Knill et al. (2005) noted a restriction in the range of play in those in distress, with expressive arts therapy offering a safe container for entering into a liminal space in which imagination and play can expand and suggest solutions. Nachmanovitch (1990) saw free play as foundational to art-making: “Full-blown artistic creativity takes place when a . . . grown-up is able to tap the source of clear, unbroken play-consciousness of the small child within” (p. 48). Boal (2008), a theatre practitioner, conceptualized the *aesthetic space* as the separation or “division between the space of the actor – the one who *acts* – and the space of the spectator – the one who *observes*” (p. 18). The aesthetic space has the property of plasticity, since anything is possible, and this liberates the imagination, inviting play and creativity. “Art making is a way to explore our imagination and begin to allow it to be more flexible, to learn how to see more options” (Allen, 1995, p. 4).

The transformative possibilities from art are available to all who participate in its creation or respond to the image created. “Imagination encourages the creative interplay of diverse forces both within the individual psyche and among people in groups” (McNiff, 2004, p. 223). Another important concept with regard to ritual is *communitas* (Turner, 1969), which refers to the feeling of shared humanity and connection experienced by those participating as they move together into the liminal state and leave behind what went before. As Schechner (1988) explained, “Aesthetic drama compels a transformation of the spectators’ view of the world by rubbing their senses against enactments of extreme events . . . [providing a] reflection in liminal time during which the transformation of consciousness takes place” (p. 172). We are united in *communitas*: “The power of the arts is their capability to convey the images that unite us beyond our own constructs of self and our present worldviews” (Herman, 2013, p. 655). The enactment of art is stimulating for artist and observer, provoking new experience: “The affective dimension fills the aesthetic space with new significations and awakens in each observer, in diverse forms and intensities, emotions, sensations and thoughts” (Boal, 2008, p. 21). For McNiff (2004), connection was fundamental to accessing the transformative power of creativity: “Relationships with others are the physical and spiritual basis of creative energy” (p. 217).

Art transforms through encountering challenging experience and surrendering to the image that comes forth. Attending to the image allows the artist and others to evolve:

The most difficult situations have always presented the greatest opportunities for transformation, both collective and individual. Without conflict and pain, one never reaches the depths of being, the most intense and formative places. (McNiff, 2004, pp. 53–54)

Grey (1998) also saw negatively valenced situations as opportunities for growth:

When an artist expresses fear, pain, anger, or other distressing negative emotions, the catharsis can enable the artist and the viewer to transform stuck or hidden feelings by moving them outward. Negative art, if it tells the truth, can have a healing function. (pp. 199–200)

Allen (1995) had personal experience of the impact of art-making for healing and personal growth: “Through art making I have solved problems, assuaged pain, faced losses and disappointments, and come to know myself deeply” (p. xvi). Expressive arts therapists Bella and Serkin (2013) summarized the healing possibilities from art-making:

An essential ingredient in any therapeutic process is promoting the awareness of the client’s undigested material, and the arts therapies aid in the facilitation of integration of physical, emotional, cognitive, spiritual, and creative elements so these aspects can be harmonized, communicated, and expressed for enhanced functioning. (p. 529)

Transformation and songwriting. The prior section explored literature related to the transformative impact of expressive arts practices in general terms. Transformative experiences arising from the practice of songwriting in particular have been studied by academic researchers from several disciplines, as well as practitioners of music therapy, psychiatry, and psychology, in both clinical and nonclinical populations (Austin, 2001; F. Baker & Wigram, 2005b; Barba, 2005; Boyd, 1992; Bruscia, 1998a; Cordobés, 1997; de l’Etoile, 2002; Doğantan-Dack, 2012; Freed, 1987; Lamont, 2012; O’Callaghan, 1997; Sawyer, 1998; Sena-Martinez, 2012; Silverman, 2011; Swan, 1989). However, the majority of the songwriting literature has focused on clinical interventions, with very limited coverage of the transformative experiences of nonclinical populations. This research project explored songwriters’ retrospective experience of transformation, and was focused neither on a clinical population nor on a therapeutic intervention. My personal experience with songwriting, as detailed in chapter 1, suggested that there was therapeutic value in songwriting for working through challenging personal material. For this reason, and with the theoretical support for the value of expressive arts therapy outlined in the previous section, I chose to review the literature on the therapeutic effects of songwriting interventions in clinical populations. Because my research focused on the subjective, transformative experiences of the songwriter, this section excludes literature on the many

sociocultural transformations that may be effected by songwriting, such as the empowerment of workers and the strengthening of the labor movement in the United States in part engendered by the activist songwriting of Joan Baez (Wharton, Spector, & Wharton, 2009), Woody Guthrie (Blumofe, Leventhal, & Ashby, 1976), and Pete Seeger (Brown, Cohl, Eigen, & Brown, 2007).

Two psychodynamic perspectives of transformation through music composition were offered by Rotenberg (1988) and Bruscia (1998a). In self psychology (Kohut, 1971), positive experiences of mirroring, idealizing, and twinship are seen as necessary for healthy development of the self and are met through *selfobjects*. Rotenberg explored how a composition might function in the role of a selfobject, and wrote:

In the area of interaction between the artist and his own work, he puts his own puzzles and mental ambiguities outside of himself and then reacts to them as if they were other than him. . . . The artist experiences the selfobject functioning of the artwork as alive, active, interpretive and eventually having transformational capabilities, to the extent that inner puzzles of the artist are worked out through this externalization. (p. 209)

Bruscia (1998a) noted that composing songs could facilitate personal growth through bringing forth an individual's intrapsychic issues, since songs are

the sounds of our personal development. . . . Songs provide easy access to a person's emotional world and to the thoughts, attitudes, values, and behaviors that emanate from it. Given the aims of psychotherapy, songs can greatly facilitate the process and provide a very effective vehicle for emotional change. (pp. 9–10)

Several contributors to Bruscia's (1998b) review of the use of music therapy spoke to the benefits of improvisational music-making and songwriting for eliciting transference—countertransference responses in the psychotherapeutic relationship, to advance treatment and enhance insight in clients (Austin, 1998; Dvorkin, 1998; Nolan, 1998).

An example of this practice in individual therapy was offered by music psychotherapist Austin (2001), who developed a method called *vocal holding*, which invites deeply traumatized individuals to improvise through singing in a psychodynamic context with the therapist, as a

means to find their voice and connect with the feelings related to the trauma. Her case studies indicated that participants felt a sense of reconnection to self and had corrective emotional experiences in the sung interaction with the therapist. In a theoretical discussion of the value of music in the therapeutic process, and drawing on vignettes from their experience as music therapists and psychoanalytic psychotherapists working from an object relations orientation (Fairbairn, 1952; Winnicott, 1987) with groups, Davies and Richards (2010) noted that improvisational songwriting could allow for reflection of the underlying feelings of the group through a safe transitional object (i.e., the improvised song).

Ficken (1976) offered four brief case studies of the benefits of songwriting by clients in both group and individual therapy. While the study lacked clear definition or methodology, it does shed some light on the possible impact of songwriting. For example, in one case, six depressed adults in a psychiatric outpatient program composed a theme song to represent their group, and expressed “surprise and pleasure that they had produced a musical composition” (Ficken, 1976, p. 166), leading to greater self-esteem. A second group for individuals in a 10-day program for recovery from alcohol abuse received two sessions of group music therapy, in which the group composed a song about alcohol use. Ficken reported that the group members were dealing with “denial of alcoholism, manipulative behavior to avoid music therapy, discomfort in groups . . . lack of assertiveness in peer groups, and inability to appropriately release feelings” (p. 167). One group member requested a recording of the song to help her handle triggers leading her to drink. Each member then asked for a copy and one said she had a friend who could use his DJ role to give the song airtime. This group appeared to have successfully addressed the presenting issues identified by the author as a result of the

songwriting process, as well as gaining a sense of accomplishment and mastery, enhancing self-esteem.

Music therapists Baker and Wigram (2005a) defined songwriting in music therapy as “the process of creating, notating and/or recording lyrics and music by the client or clients and therapist within a therapeutic relationship to address psychosocial, emotional, cognitive and communication needs of the client” (p. 16). The client creates a song that expresses “his or her personal needs, feelings and thoughts” (Baker & Wigram, 2005a, p. 14). Songwriting has been used in music therapy in adult populations to address the therapeutic needs of cancer and palliative care patients (O’Callaghan, 1997); substance abuse (Dingle, Gleadhill, & Baker, 2008; Freed, 1987; Gardstrom, Carlini, Josefczyk, & Love, 2013); living with HIV seropositivity (Cordobés, 1997); and living with long-term, severe mental illness (Grocke, Bloch, & Castle, 2009). In a survey of 477 professional music therapists practicing in 29 countries, Baker, Wigram, Stott, and McFerran (2008) identified the most frequently cited goals for the use of songwriting in music therapy as:

a) experiencing mastery, develop self-confidence, enhance self-esteem; b) choice and decision making; c) develop a sense of self; d) externalizing thoughts, fantasies, and emotions; e) telling the client’s story; and f) gaining insight or clarifying thoughts and feelings. (p. 105)

In light of the focus on both creating and sharing original songs in my research, it is interesting to note that Rolvsjord (2005) saw the ongoing evolution of a song beyond the act of composition as contributing to the client’s healing and growth:

The therapeutic process concerned with songwriting does not end when the song is finished. . . . [It] . . . continues . . . as the song is sung repeatedly in therapy, as the song is performed for other therapists, family or friends, or sometimes even performed in concert. (p. 98)

A mixed-methods study of the effects of songwriting in a group music therapy context for 17 adults living in the community and dealing with long-term, severe mental illness was

conducted by Grocke, Bloch, and Castle (2009). A 10-week intervention was designed, with 1 hour per week of therapy, involving songwriting, improvising, and ultimately recording original songs in a professional studio. Statistically significant improvement was found on five items of the Australian adaptation of the World Health Organization Quality of Life scale, and themes arising from the qualitative data included pleasure and pride in the creativity and songwriting experienced, and the ability to share songs with family and friends.

In an analysis of 270 English-language songs of at least four lines written by clients in music therapy and published in journal articles, McFerran, Baker, and Krout (2011) sought to test the hypothesis that song lyrics in therapy serve the function of either affirmation or expression of the client's experiences. The hypothesis was not upheld, and the authors discussed at length the obstacles to conducting such a study. In particular, many song lyrics are more metaphorical than concrete; lyrics published in journals are often incomplete or lack contextual information about the client; and the music therapist's influence, particularly in psychodynamic treatment, affects the lyrical content. The method employed a deductive content analysis, with three raters coding each set of lyrics for segments pertaining to either expression or affirmation of the client's experiences. It was unclear if the researchers were performing the rating. Interrater reliability was noted as being poor, although no details about rater training or the metrics were provided. The authors conceded that an inductive approach to thematic analysis might have revealed more about how lyrical content was serving the client. Due to the often metaphorical and nondeterministic meaning of lyrics, there is no one other than the originator of the song who can authoritatively speak to its meaning and personal impact. This is precisely why I sought to investigate the subjective experience of songwriters in my study.

The effectiveness of a single-session group songwriting music therapy intervention was compared with a single-session analysis of group therapy analyzing lyrics to commercially available songs for evoking emotional change in 26 short-term residents of a substance abuse rehabilitation program (Jones, 2005). Those in the songwriting group individually wrote original lyrics to the song “Yesterday” to express their thoughts about the past, present, and future. Although no statistically significant differences were found between the two groups, based on pre- and post-administration of a modified version of the Visual Analog Mood Scale, there were greater improvements in the means of 10 of 11 emotional variables in the songwriting group compared with the lyrical analysis group. While not statistically significant, songwriting led to greater joy, acceptance, surprise, and reduced shame, anxiety, and guilt. Jones (2005) suggested that:

Songwriting activities involve the person in creating his or her own work based on personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. . . . Having one’s original song performed may have increased self-esteem, validated feelings, and provided immediate positive feedback. (pp. 104–105)

Performing music can enhance wellbeing (Lamont, 2012), although the specific experience of transformation and the long-term impact remains an area for investigation. Lamont (2012) asked university music students to free-write an account of the strongest experience of music they had encountered. The responses of the 35 who wrote about performing were thematically analyzed to understand how their experiences might relate to the hedonic (pleasurable, positive emotions) and eudaimonic (engagement/flow, meaning, social relationships, achievement) qualities deemed necessary components of wellbeing in the positive psychology framework (Seligman, Parks, & Steen, 2005). Components of wellbeing were found in all responses, with eight respondents’ accounts demonstrating all components of the wellbeing framework while reporting no negative emotions. Only one person explicitly identified that he

or she was writing about performing original popular music, and about half the responses gave no indication of the nature of the music being played. Lamont concluded that “strong experiences of music performance are dominated by the eudaimonic route to happiness” (p. 589), and that performing music enhances wellbeing.

In my literature search, I located only two qualitative studies of the *subjective* experience of songwriting in nonclinical populations that were concerned with transformative experience or outcomes (Barba, 2005; Sena-Martinez, 2012). These were discussed earlier with regard to the creative process. I now focus in more detail on their findings with regard to transformation as a result of songwriting.

Barba (2005) combined a heuristic process of engaging her own songwriting process with phenomenologically informed analysis of unstructured 1-hour interviews with eight songwriters aged 20-40, the majority of whom were not professional or actively participating in recording or performing activities. Little detail was offered on the genre of songs her participants were composing. Her particular interest was in how songwriting might offer therapeutic benefits, if conceptualized in terms of Jungian individuation (Hall, 1986) and McNiff’s (1981) theories of arts-based psychotherapy. Songs, from these perspectives, are viewed as symbolic images from the realm of the unconscious in the service of healing and deepening of the connection to the *Self*, or “the ordering and unifying center of the total psyche (conscious and unconscious)” (Edinger, 1974, p. 3).

Barba’s (2005) heuristic inquiry into her own songwriting experience revealed how songwriting had aided her in bringing to light and engaging her *shadow* material—“the ‘negative’ side of the personality, the sum of all those unpleasant qualities we like to hide, together with the insufficiently developed functions and the contents of the personal

unconscious” (Jung, 1966, p. 66). This led her first to become aware of and then begin to actively work with psychological material underlying issues of painful family relationships, bulimia, narcissism, perfectionism, and feelings about her divorce. She reported feeling more able to stand up for herself, more confident about sex and relationships, and that her life had become “far more bearable” (Barba, 2005, p. 173) as a result of her songwriting process.

A theme from Barba’s (2005) analysis of her interview data that pertains to transformation was *Feelings*, which captured the fact that songwriting was experienced as an emotional process. Participants’ responses indicated that feelings often changed as a result of writing a song, from fear, sadness, or frustration to relief, power, and joy. Several mentioned catharsis and surprise at what emerged from the process. *Sharing Songs* was also deemed important by participants, both for the benefit of others who were visibly moved by the songs, and for the songwriter in finding expression.

In her discussion, Barba (2005) presented categories of therapeutic benefits from songwriting, as follows: the process of retrieving forgotten songs; the creative process of songwriting; musical and lyrical content; the reflection and review process; the refinement process; performance; a centering presence enabled by songs. It was not clear how her themes were intended to map to the categories, and some categories appear to overlap. For example, reflection and review and refinement might be seen as part of the creative process of songwriting. However, her research does lend some support to the idea that the process of creating original songs is subjectively experienced as transformative.

Sena-Martinez (2012) sought to understand how psychospiritual transformation might arise from songwriting, using a heuristic inquiry method to explore her own songwriting process along with interviews with six adult singer-songwriters composing in a variety of popular genres.

Three participants identified with their Native American roots, while three identified with nonindigenous cultures. Her research focused on “how each songwriter encounter[ed] inspiration” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 19) for a song, the differences experienced by Native American coresearchers compared with the non-Native American-identified coresearchers, and how sharing original songs affected the songwriter. She chose to undertake a comparative study because she found very limited literature regarding how songwriting might be transformative for those identified with indigenous cultures, compared with those not identifying with indigenous roots. She self-identified as being of Spanish and Navajo descent. Participants were required to have a regular practice of songwriting (two to three songs per month) and perform publicly (on a weekly basis to at least one person); to identify songwriting as a spiritual or transpersonal experience and as “a mystery of inspiration or embodiment” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 57); and to have the experience of psychospiritual transformation from songwriting and an altered view of life as a result. Coresearchers were asked to submit a recording of one original song and to prepare their thoughts for an interview about the psychospiritual transformation its writing had engendered, with the aid of a reflective exercise. Semi-structured interviews were conducted, in which the researcher asked participants to discuss in detail their experience of the transformative aspects of the selected song, and reflect on inspiration with regard to their songwriting process. Then, the song was played and she invited further reflection on its significance for inspiration and transformation. Transcribed interviews were thematically analyzed.

There are significant weaknesses in the design and execution of Sena-Martinez’s (2012) study. The instructions for the preparatory exercise included a definition of psychospiritual transformation, which may have served to bias the choice of song selected by the coresearcher, and to suppress the participant’s own definition or conceptualization of the changes experienced

through songwriting in favor of that of the researcher's. Her coresearchers were explicitly screened for viewing their songwriting as a transformative and transpersonal experience. Her data analysis unsurprisingly identified transformation and spiritual experience in songwriting as core themes but failed to offer much detail in terms of shedding light on the nature of the transformation experienced or the factors underlying it. Her reported themes pertaining to songwriting and transformation were based on only 6 participant interviews, a rather small sample. At times, the quotes offered in support of the themes were not compelling in providing a strong link to the extrapolated theme, suggesting flaws in the thematic coding process; the same code might have been assigned to participant experiences that were not really similar or themes might have been imposed on the data rather than derived from them. Her comparison of the experiences of non-Native-American coresearchers with those of indigenously identified coresearchers was based on only three members in each group.

Her first group of themes pertained to psychospiritual transformation. The first stated that such transformation was present in the inspiration phase of the process, although several of the quotes offered in support of this theme failed to pinpoint the timing of transformation in this way, and could have been interpreted as being applicable to the entire songwriting process. The next theme in this group was that transformation is related to an "emotional or euphoric state of being" (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 107). The quotes spoke of a range of emotions present at the time of the emergence of a new song, including euphoria, calm, sadness, and frustration. Coresearchers talked of revisiting the emotional context of the song in subsequent performances, although the exact ways in which this could be transformative were not elaborated in detail. It is interesting to note that Barba (2005) also reported the significance of emotionality in songwriting

with her Feelings theme (together with more explicit indications of how transformation occurred with regard to emotional states and experiences).

In another group of themes related to connection with spirit, Sena-Martinez (2012) reported that her coresearchers experienced a major turning point in their lives coincident with the writing of the song that they had identified as significant for transformation, and that these songs opened “the heart to the transcendent dimension” (p. 112). However, the supporting quotes did not strongly reinforce this theme. Another theme was the sense of being “a conduit or vessel, like being used by God or [a] higher power to write songs” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 113). Again, given the inclusion criteria, this finding is unsurprising; however, it is interesting to note that this theme is highly consonant with the descriptions of many songwriters interviewed in the popular media, as described earlier in this chapter.

Sena-Martinez (2012) reported two key findings pertaining to psychospiritual transformation through songwriting: First, that it presented as an ongoing process rather than as a specific event; and, second, that it “could be identified as a death and resurrection process or healing and renewing progression. For most coresearchers, this came as an internal, ongoing journey into the creative aspect of ones [*sic*] being” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 147). She also found that “during the songwriting process, the songwriter grows in their [*sic*] understanding of the meaning behind their [*sic*] songs. This gives the songwriter an exclusive and personal awareness of the origin of his or her song” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 133). In addition, the songwriter “finds an enhancement of his or her quality of life and feels as though he or she is connecting with others in a spiritual and deeply meaningful way” (Sena-Martinez, 2012, p. 134). For several coresearchers in Sena-Martinez’s study, the moment of inspiration was the most transformative. Some credited the emotion present during the creation of the song and revisiting

it subsequently with invoking psychospiritual transformation. All coresearchers identified permanent change as a result of songwriting, which they described as seeing their world with new eyes and experiencing greater freedom, resolution, joy, connection, and acceptance.

Conclusion

This review of the literature presented the most salient general models of creativity and the creative process, along with research specific to the practice of songwriting. General theories and research supporting transpersonal, cocreative, and/or intersubjective experience were discussed, since a subquestion of the research concerned the experience of collaboration and intersubjectivity in the songwriting process. Ways in which intersubjectivity is explicitly reflected in the literature on creativity and songwriting were also explored. The final section presented two developmental models of psychospiritual transformation and expressive arts models of the transformative experience of art-making practices. A review of the literature on the therapeutic use of songwriting with clinical populations was also included.

The literature regarding the subjective transformative experiences of songwriting in nonclinical populations is very sparse. The two most relevant studies (Barba, 2005; Sena-Martinez, 2012) both indicate transformation occurred. However, Barba (2005) focused on the transformative experience of working with a particular aspect of Jungian psychology (the shadow) in her research, while Sena-Martinez's (2012) study had a number of methodological and analytic flaws. Neither researcher offered clear and rich descriptions of the kinds of change participants experienced or the factors most relevant and important in the songwriting process for transformation to occur. My research was intended to contribute to the knowledge and understanding of these questions.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

I conducted a qualitative, exploratory study to address the research question laid out in chapter 1, employing heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) coupled with applied thematic analysis (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2011). This choice of method reflects both my deep, personal experience with the topic and my social constructivist (Creswell, 2007; Mertens, 2010) worldview. The chapter begins with a detailed discussion of the rationale for the choice of method. Subsequent sections lay out the research procedures employed, including how heuristic inquiry methods were applied to this study, how participants were recruited and screened, how data were gathered and analyzed, methods employed to assess the quality of the research, and how ethical considerations were accommodated.

Study Design and Rationale

This research investigated the songwriter-musician's lived experience of composition, recording, and performance of original popular songs. As discussed in chapter 2, little research exists on subjective transformative experiences reported by songwriters as a result of their creative process. This study was therefore exploratory in nature, with the goal of obtaining and interpreting detailed descriptive data from songwriter-musicians to understand more about their experience. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) noted that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 4). According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research seeks to understand "the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" to offer a "complex description and interpretation of the problem" (p. 37). The current research objective was thus well matched with a qualitative research design, with the intent to solicit from songwriter-musicians rich descriptions of their experience with the songwriting creative process.

The choice of a particular qualitative research method is best determined by the fit with the research question, the researcher's philosophical and ontological stance, and the goals of the study. For this study, I chose to use the inductive method of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990). Important concepts described by Moustakas (1990) as central to the heuristic research method include employing tacit knowledge and intuition; *indwelling* or "turning inward to seek a deeper, more extended comprehension of the nature of meaning of a quality or theme of human experience" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 24); focusing (Gendlin, 2007); and self-search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery. Anchoring the study in the researcher's *internal frame of reference* is central to the practice: "Whether the knowledge derived is attained through tacit, intuitive, or observed phenomena—whether the knowledge is deepened and extended through indwelling, focusing, self-searching, or dialogue with others—its medium or base is the internal frame of reference" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 26).

Moustakas (1990) wrote that "in heuristic research the investigator must have had a direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must have been autobiographical connections" (p. 14). The heuristic method thus begins with the researcher's individual experience and curiosity about a particular phenomenon as a means to surface the research question, and this personal perspective and process of deepening understanding forms an overarching umbrella for the method as the study proceeds. Heuristic research may be defined as:

a process of internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience and develops methods and procedures for investigation and analysis. The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries. (Moustakas, 1990, p. 9)

However, it is important to note that it is the research question and not the researcher him- or herself that is the topic of inquiry, although there is clearly a strong link between the two because the researcher's own experience is foundational to the study. Moustakas (1990) noted that while questions studied in the heuristic method emerge from the personal experience of the researcher, "with virtually every question that matters personally there is also a social—and perhaps universal—significance" (p. 15). Although this is not required for the heuristic method, Moustakas (1990) indicated that it is quite typical to involve others in the inquiry, exploring the research question through "extended interviews that often take the form of dialogues with oneself and one's research participants" (p. 46).

In line with Moustakas's (1990) description of the autobiographical genesis of heuristic inquiry research, my initial interest in the topic of this study came directly from reflections on my experience with my own songwriting practice. A detailed recounting of my personal journey with songwriting and its relationship to the evolution of the research question was offered in chapter 1. While I had some initial ideas about how this creative process had transformed me, I felt drawn to develop more insight and clarity: I sought to speak with others to learn how songwriting had affected them and their lives, and to see whether their experiences had in some way mirrored my own or were different. This awareness of a personal experience calling for further exploration is exactly the precondition described by Moustakas (1990) when he commences a heuristic inquiry research project:

I begin the heuristic journey with something that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown. . . . The initial "data" is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its nature. (p. 13)

In fact, "one's own self-discoveries, awarenesses, and understandings are the initial steps of the process" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 16). My experience of being drawn to research songwriting's

effects on the songwriter as a result of my own songwriting practice reflects the autobiographical link in the heuristic inquiry process defined by Moustakas (1990), and this qualitative method fits well with the research objective of an exploratory study of subjective experience. A final condition for validating the choice of method is its consonance with the researcher's philosophical beliefs.

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations

The design of any study and the choice of method are intimately connected with the researcher's personal philosophical and theoretical stance. In line with my own philosophical beliefs, this study was informed by a social constructivist worldview (Creswell, 2007; Gergen, 2009; Mertens, 2010). The central premise of this perspective is that knowledge "is socially constructed by people active in the research process" (Mertens, 2010, p. 12): It is through social interaction and relationship that meaning is created. Heuristic inquiry as a research method is well aligned with a social constructivist stance and the cocreation of meaning: "The heuristic scientist, in contact with others, places high value on the depth and sensitivity of interchange, on the promise of I-Thou moments, and on the steady movement toward a true intersubjectivity" (Douglass & Moustakas, 1985, p. 50). This perspective of research as a cocreative process also fits well with the discussion of intersubjectivity and cocreativity in chapter 2, and nicely parallels the research question's focus on the creative process of songwriting and intersubjectivity in the transformative experience of songwriting. I share Douglass and Moustakas's (1985) view of the value of inviting and attending to intersubjective experiences in research and sought to do this in my interactions with participants.

The ontological orientation associated with constructivism is one of multiple realities (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). For this study, this implied that each songwriter-musician was

held to have a unique view of the experience of creating original songs, based upon his or her personal demographics, personality, life experiences, and beliefs—and each person’s view was deemed equally valid. There was no explicit research goal to attempt to universalize or unify experience. It is through the rich and detailed descriptive data offered by qualitative methods such as heuristic inquiry that researchers can begin to appreciate the texture and complexity of individual experience, and this was my primary interest in conducting the study. However, to the extent that commonalities were present in the individual experiences I learned about, these were reported as findings (see chapter 5).

From an epistemological perspective, I, as the researcher, was in close contact with participants, seeking to step into their reality. As will be detailed later in this chapter, I personally conducted interviews with each participant. I consider myself to be a member of the population I studied, which is characteristic of heuristic inquiry, since the research question arises directly from initial engagement with personal experience (Moustakas, 1990). Given that my participants and I shared the experience of being songwriter-musicians, it was important to make a conscious decision about whether to communicate my “insider status” in the conduct of the research. Jourard (1968) showed that self-disclosure tends to elicit disclosure in turn, which may lead to richer descriptive data. Moustakas (1990) employed the term *co-researcher* to signify his understanding of the social constructivist nature of knowledge. He wrote that “dialogue involves cooperative sharing in which co-researchers and primary researchers open pathways to each other for explicating the phenomenon being investigated” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 47). I elected to disclose to participants that I am a songwriter and musician, and shared some of my own experience when it seemed to serve to advance the dialogue unfolding between us.

I have attempted to situate myself clearly in the context of the study both in terms of my own experience of songwriting, and by acknowledging my own biases and beliefs about, for example, the value of the creative process for personal, transformative growth. However, in the conduct of the research, I did my best to avoid imposing my beliefs on participants. I did this through careful formulation of the language of the interview questions, using open- rather than closed-ended questions, and through use of clinical skills I have developed as a psychologist in training (my clinical path was discussed in chapter 1.) As a clinician, I strive to create an atmosphere of curiosity, openness, deep listening, and nonjudgment in inviting the sharing of experience, while minimizing my own projections onto the client. I believe these skills served me well in conducting the interviews.

Douglass and Moustakas (1985) suggested that “in acquiring data during heuristic investigation, one’s ability to encounter other people and the world is no less important than the facility for plumbing one’s own self experientially” (p. 51). In describing interviewing procedures, Moustakas (1990) noted his affinity with the views of Weber (1986), who wrote that “we cannot and should not be unaffected by what is said” (p. 68). To deepen the line of questioning in my interactions with participants, I allowed my experience of the participant to affect me in a holistic sense, through the use of transpersonal clinical skills, such as attunement to participants’ embodied experience (Aposhyan, 2004; Gendlin, 1996). Heuristic inquiry in fact suggests the use of focusing (Gendlin, 2007)—a psychotherapeutic approach to accessing embodied experience—as an essential process in the method (Moustakas, 1990). In his recommendations about how to approach interviews, Moustakas (1990) also drew attention to the intersubjective experience that can lead to new discovery through dialogue by quoting Buber (1965): “the word [by which Buber meant I-You; see chapter 2 on Buber and intersubjectivity]

arises in a substantial way between men who have been seized in their depths and opened out by the dynamic of an elemental togetherness. The interhuman opens out what would otherwise remain unopened” (p. 86, as cited in Moustakas, 1990, p. 48). I conclude that the heuristic inquiry method, as defined by Moustakas (1990), is fully compatible with the use of transpersonal, noncognitive approaches, such as focusing, to advance learning through the intersubjective surfacing of experience during interviews. Such practices already form an integral part of my personal way of being in the world, and I naturally employed them in my heuristic self-reflection with regard to the topic of this research as well.

Research Question

As noted in chapter 1, the primary research question was: How do songwriters experience change in themselves and their lives as a result of composing, recording, and performing original popular songs? Embedded within this question was my assumption that transformation does occur as a result of this process, which appears justified based on the review of the literature in chapter 2. Nonetheless, I made a conscious effort to review and give particular attention to any data which contradicted this assumption, both during the interviews and during analysis.

Within the context of the primary research question, the following subquestions were of interest, and informed the development of the interview protocol (Appendix A), discussed later in this chapter:

1. What factors in the songwriting creative process are associated with the songwriter-musician’s transformation?
2. How do intersubjective experiences in the composition, recording, and live performance of original popular songs transform the songwriter?

Participants

The following sections describe criteria used to delineate the population of potential participants. Procedures for screening are discussed in a subsequent section.

Inclusion criteria. A minimum of 12 and maximum of 16 participants who self-identified as both musicians/performers/recording artists and songwriters were recruited for this study. Moustakas (1990) suggested that 10–15 coresearchers is a reasonable number for heuristic inquiry. Participants were required to be lyricists writing in English; melody writing was not a requirement. This was because I had an interest in the choice of topics and lyrical content of participants' songs with regard to a possible relationship to their life experience and transformation. Participants were required to be at least 21 years old, composing original songs either individually or in collaboration with others, and available to meet through Internet-based videoconferencing or in person in the greater San Francisco Bay Area. There was no restriction on gender or ethnicity; however, I made best efforts to foster sample diversity.

In my proposal for this research, I had specified that participants had to have written (or cowritten) at least five songs over the prior 2 years. If songs were written as a member of a musical group, the group was required to have maintained a consistent membership configuration for at least 2 years, in order to give some stability to the creative environment under exploration in the study. However, as I began the screening process and learned more about the volatility of songwriters' collaborative engagements and their variability in songwriting productivity over their lifetimes, I requested authorization from my committee to modify these criteria. Prospective participants reported periods of songwriting prolifically and periods of not writing at all. Some mentioned that they had steady output but that this was maybe one or two songs a year. Many had moved in and out of different kinds of musical and

collaborative configurations over their lifetime of musical expression, at times playing solo and at others in bands. Some played in more than one band at a time. Taking these experiences into account, I changed the criterion of productivity to 20 songs over the lifetime and reduced the required tenure in a participant's current band configuration to at least 1 year.

Participants were also required to have experience recording and performing their original songs. These constructs were defined and operationalized in chapter 1. In addition, participants were asked to be willing to provide me with access to a recording of one original song as part of the data for the study, and to be willing to have the lyrics quoted and credited, according to the participant's preferred method of attribution and subject to fair usage laws in this study's write-up (see Appendix B), or in subsequent publications that might stem from the collection of the data for this study.

Exclusion criteria. Participant interviews called for discussion of some fairly abstract and complex concepts and experiences. Thus, sufficient mastery of English and the ability to articulate experience clearly was a requirement for participation. I made a subjective judgment as a result of my screening conversation as to whether the potential participant met this criterion, and was prepared to exclude those who did not. Participants who reported a currently active diagnosis of a psychological disorder with psychotic features were also to be excluded from the study. Other exclusions pertaining to the nature of the participant's compositions were detailed in chapter 1.

Recruitment

A purposive sampling method was used for the study. The objective was to complete a minimum of 12 interviews with qualified participants. To allow for attrition, 16 participants were sought. I attempted to recruit a sample with both geographical and musical diversity. I

offered no incentive or compensation of any kind to participants. Interest in the study in informal conversations was extremely high, and many people spontaneously recommended possible participants to me. I anticipated that recruitment would not pose a major challenge. However, I employed a variety of mechanisms to aid in and maximize my chances of successful recruitment, including:

- Creating an electronic flyer (see Appendix C), which was used in a number of electronic venues, such as distribution to my personal network through Facebook and e-mail (using an e-mail account specifically designated for this study).
- Posting calls for participants (using the flyer above) on Internet-based Web sites most commonly used by musicians to network and promote themselves, such as ReverbNation.com and MySpace.com.
- Networking through my membership in the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), including through contacts I made during my attendance at the annual ASCAP Expo conference in April 2013.
- Networking through my membership in two songwriting circles.
- Directly soliciting well-known artists local to the greater San Francisco Bay Area, and lesser known songwriter-musicians actively performing original popular music in the area.

Twelve participants were recruited in total; these were obtained through e-mail and Facebook solicitations through my personal network (7 participants), direct solicitation of artists in the Bay Area (4 participants), and networking through my membership in songwriting circles (1 participant).

Procedures

This section begins with an explanation of the steps in the heuristic inquiry method (Moustakas, 1990) and how these were applied to this study. It then describes in detail the specific procedures used for screening, interviewing, data collection, data handling, and data analysis.

Applying the heuristic inquiry method. There are six phases in heuristic inquiry research studies, each with associated procedures: initial engagement, immersion, incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis (Moustakas, 1990). These steps map quite well onto the staged creative process models explored in chapter 2 (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; Wallas, 1926), reflecting Moustakas's (1977) application of his own and others' research into creativity to the specific creative process of conducting research. The top row of Figure 1 shows the primary phases in the research process with associated heuristic inquiry steps. An embedded (or nested) heuristic inquiry process also took place within the data analysis phase, depicted in the second row of the figure. In this section, I describe how I engaged each heuristic inquiry step during the primary research process of the study. The data analysis procedures and heuristic inquiry subprocess are detailed in the following section.

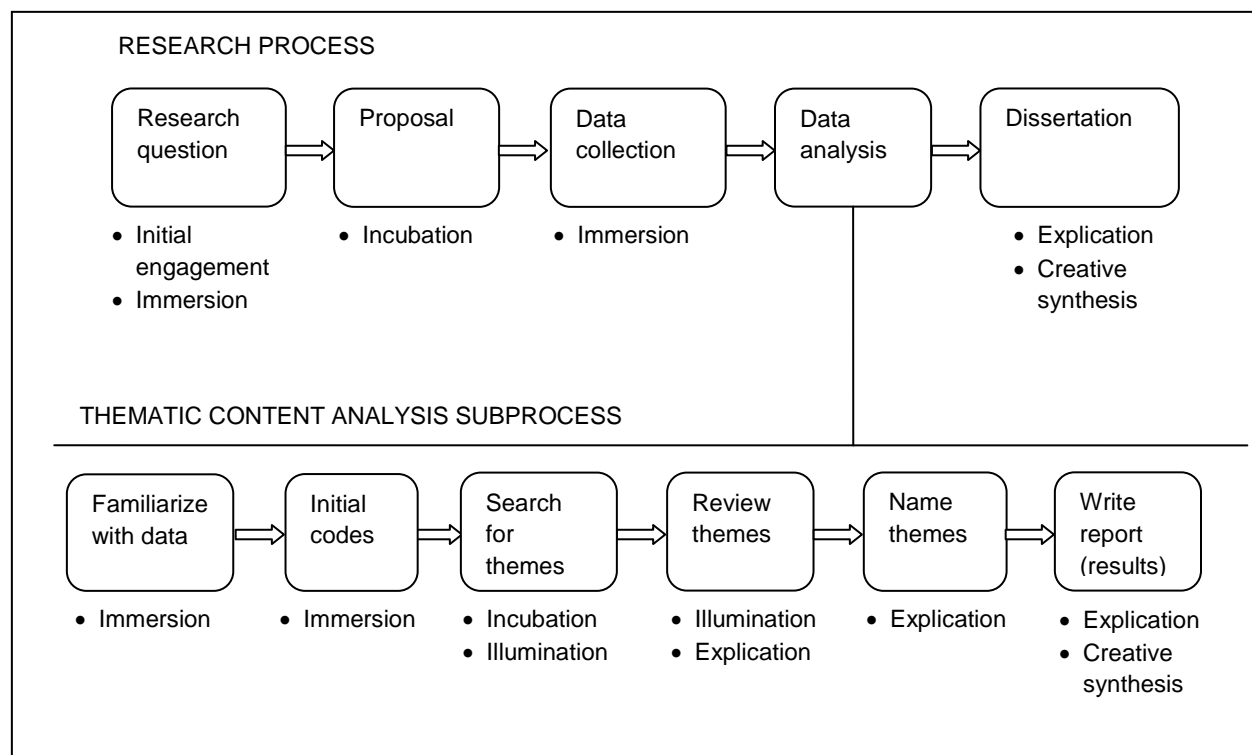


Figure 1. Heuristic inquiry steps mapped to research process flow.

Initial engagement. In the initial engagement step, the researcher attunes to a passionate call or interest about something and begins a process of self-dialogue in order to surface a more precise research question. This going inward can involve processes of attuning to tacit knowledge; using intuition to make connections between implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge; consciously practicing indwelling, to attend to inner experience; and focusing (Gendlin, 2007), which expresses somatic experience through symbol.

This phase formed the foundation for conceptualizing my research question and elaborating my research proposal. I described in chapter 1 my personal journey of coming into awareness of the importance of songwriting as a transformative practice, which involved attuning to tacit knowledge about its significance for me and others, intuition about what might be happening in the process, and the use of expressive arts to give symbolic form to the emerging research question. I wrote regularly in a journal, practiced meditation, invited explicit intention

around clarity into my yoga practice, and used my artwork as inspirational images by placing them on the bulletin board in my office and updating them as new images emerged. I drew many images and created many abstract mindmaps to give form to the emerging research question.

Immersion. Once the research question is enunciated, the second step of heuristic inquiry requires that the researcher immerse her- or himself in the question, “living” it at all times, constantly looking for meaning or related experiences or ideas in daily life, as well as employing more explicitly inwardly focused modes of deepening contact with it. This phase may also include widening the inquiry to gather data from others with experience of the phenomenon.

Once I understood that songwriting and transformation were at the heart of my research question, I began immersing myself in the world of songwriter-musicians. I joined a second songwriting circle, which led me to learn about a local songwriting class just starting up in which I was able to enroll. I began reading books. As I wrote my own songs, I journaled and reflected on the experience. I joined the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers, and registered for its annual conference. I allowed intuition to inform my choices: When an invitation presented that intuitively seemed connected to my research question, I accepted it without knowing why. In this way, I found myself having new music-making experiences and meeting other musicians. I began talking with other songwriters about their experiences and to researchers with related interests. I refined my question further through guided visualization and attending to visceral positive or negative feelings which came up as I contemplated emphasizing different aspects of the process of songwriting or talked about my question with others. This immersion allowed me to clarify my research question, and to hone in on the specific research

design for my study. I drafted my research proposal, met with my committee, and submitted the proposal for approval from the Research Ethics Committee.

Incubation. During the third heuristic inquiry step of incubation, the researcher retreats from the intense focus on and absorption with the topic, to allow “the inner workings of the tacit dimension and intuition to continue to clarify and extend understanding on levels outside the immediate awareness” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). While I awaited approval to proceed with my research, I stepped away from conscious engagement with my research question. I prepared to start my predoctoral clinical internship and sought new housing.

Illumination. In the illumination phase of heuristic inquiry, new awareness about the research question and a “clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29) becomes available to consciousness, and can feel like a breakthrough. When approval was granted for me to proceed with my research, I applied myself very intensively to data collection. As will be discussed below in the section on Screening and Interviewing, I also sought approval to add a question to my interview protocol (Appendix A) before beginning any interviews. I believe the insight that I needed to do so was the result of incubation while awaiting approval, and might be considered an experience of illumination. However, the data collection phase was largely immersive in nature, implying a regression to an earlier step in the heuristic inquiry process. The embedded heuristic inquiry process associated with the data analysis phase (discussed below) also included significant experiences with immersion, incubation, and illumination.

Explication. Explication—the penultimate step in the heuristic inquiry method—is concerned with trying to understand the layers of meaning associated with what came forward in illumination, with particular emphasis on focusing and indwelling as tools. In this step, “a more

complete apprehension of the key ingredients is discovered” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 31). As I concluded data analysis and prepared to write chapter 5 presenting my results, I engaged in a number of processes to aid me in excavating and relating the themes that had emerged. I wrote extensive memos expanding on my understanding of each theme and its possible relationship to the others, and used giant handwritten diagrams to map possible schemas for representing my results. I reflected on my own experience and situated it within the larger context of my findings. I used focusing, typically in conjunction with meditative trail running, during which time I often gained essential clarity on distinctions between themes and relationships among them.

Creative synthesis. In the final step of heuristic inquiry, the findings are synthesized through tacit and intuitive powers, usually leading to a narrative depiction of the phenomenon. I employed meditative trail running and dance to open to my awareness of the synthesis of my learning from the research process. This section has examined how I applied heuristic inquiry methods to my research. The chapter now continues with detailing the various research procedures used.

Screening and interviewing. Prospective participants who responded to solicitations or were referred through networking were screened by me in person, by telephone, or by Internet videoconferencing to determine their eligibility. Occasionally, I would encounter a prospective participant unexpectedly through my participation in local music communities, and would informally discuss the key screening criteria to determine whether it made sense to set up a formal screening conversation. I began the screening procedure by offering a very general description of the project, being careful not to introduce bias or set expectations about what a respondent might have experienced with regard to songwriting. I also explained the anticipated

time commitment and timeline. I communicated to participants that they needed to be willing to make themselves available for two possible follow-up contacts, at my discretion, the first by telephone for up to 30 minutes and the second by telephone or e-mail and requiring no more than 10 minutes of the person's time. If the respondent wished to continue after receiving this information, I administered the Demographics Questionnaire (Appendix D). The questionnaire began with screening questions needed to qualify participants (to cover the inclusion and exclusion criteria detailed above). I also subjectively assessed the respondent's capacity to articulate in English, based on the responses to screening questions. If the potential participant passed the screening test (questions SCR1–SCR23), I then continued to administer the remainder of the Demographics Questionnaire, which covered items such as gender, ethnicity, religion or spiritual orientation, educational background, current and childhood place of residence, occupation, parental occupations, income, and relationship status. I also requested the participant's permission for me to sit in on recording sessions, attend performances, or view videos of recording and performing the participant's original songs, where feasible.

As each participant passed the screen and was accepted into the study, I mailed him or her a packet with two copies signed by me of the Informed Consent Form (Appendix E) and a copy of the Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix F), and asked him or her to return one signed copy of the Informed Consent Form to me in the stamped envelope I had enclosed. The other copy was for the participant's personal records. A very important aspect of the Informed Consent Form for participants was deciding whether to select a pseudonym for use in the research and write-up. Even with a pseudonym, a participant's confidentiality cannot be guaranteed, because comments quoted in the write-up may well give clues to a person's identity, either because the person is a well-known musician talking about aspects of his or her experience

that may be identifiable to fans or because the reader happens to know that individual by chance and recognize something in the profile or quoted material. A musician well known to the public may in fact prefer that his or her comments and lyrics be attributed to his or her real name or stage name. Before mailing out the packet with the Informed Consent Form, I reviewed the limits to privacy and confidentiality and explained the implications of choosing not to use a pseudonym with each participant. I also let him or her know that it was possible to change the decision at the conclusion of the interview; in fact, all participants declined to use a pseudonym and chose to use either their real name or their stage name.

I asked each participant to select a song that had had a significant effect on him or her. If the song was cowritten, I obtained cowriter contact information from the participant, and sent the Cowriter Release Form (Appendix G) to the cowriter, again with a stamped envelope to return to me. I asked the participant to forward a copy of the lyrics of the selected song and a Web link or file with an audio or video recording of the song to me via e-mail.

Once I had received the signed copy of the Informed Consent Form and the Cowriter Release Form (if applicable), I then scheduled a 1- to 2- hour in-depth interview at a mutually acceptable time, using the Semi-Structured Interview Protocol (Appendix A). I used Skype videoconferencing for interviews with remote participants. I asked local participants to select a safe location for our meeting, where we could have privacy to talk freely without interruption and play music without disrupting anyone else. All interviews were digitally recorded on two devices for redundancy.

I requested and received authorization from my committee to make three modifications to my protocol (Appendix A). Before beginning any interviews, I added a question at the start of the protocol asking the participant to recount his or her autobiography as a songwriter and

musician and situate his or her current musical activities. I realized that this would provide valuable context for understanding that individual's development as a songwriter, as well as allowing me to present a rich and descriptive profile of the person, beyond the demographic information collected in the screening process. After conducting two interviews, I added question 4c (Do you see a connection between songwriting and spirituality?) because it became clear from the first 2 participants' responses that, while they might not see themselves as having spiritual or religious beliefs or practices (which is the main thrust of question 4), they nonetheless saw a relationship between songwriting and spirituality. Adding this question allowed more scope for participants to express their views of the possible relatedness between songwriting and spirituality. At the same time, I also modified question 6 (How has writing and sharing your songs affected you personally?). It became clear to me early on that the original wording (Has the process of writing, recording, and performing your songs changed you?) was both closed-ended and assumed that change would be easily identifiable. Participants appeared to experience songwriting as a continuous experience so interwoven with their lives that it made more sense to invite reflection on the impact of the process, which I hoped would reveal in what ways change might have occurred.

Treatment of data. Participant confidentiality was of primary importance to me in my study. Data from nonqualifying respondents was destroyed immediately in a paper shredder. Any physical or paper-based data, such as the Informed Consent Forms (Appendix E), printouts of the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D), and handwritten notes, were stored in my private office in a locked cabinet accessible only to me. In addition, raw data in audio, video, e-mail, and text files (containing my computer-based notes) were stored in a password-protected computer to which only I had access. Although I had initially considered the possibility of using

a transcription service, I decided to transcribe all the interviews myself, using a word processor to capture the interview in an electronic document. I concluded this would offer the greatest consistency in transcribing the various major segments of the interview protocol across participants. In addition, recordings of the Skype interviews were sometimes difficult to decipher and I felt that my recollection of the conversations and knowledge of the material being discussed made me the best person to accurately transcribe those conversations. Transcribed files and electronic files with completed Demographic Questionnaires for each participant were individually encrypted with a password known only to me, in addition to being password-protected at the level of the computer. I employed Dedoose (Sociocultural Research Consultants, 2013a) Web-based software for thematic content analysis (described in the next section), which required uploading all text files to be analyzed. I reviewed the security features of Dedoose prior to selecting it, because I wanted to be certain that my data would be appropriately secured. The following details the rigorous security protections in place to protect the data of Dedoose users:

Our data center is SSAE 16 Type II certified. This certification ensures compliance with NIST, HIPAA, SOX, and GLBA and is the most stringent professional security audit available. In our case, this means that the staff and personnel allowed into the Data Center have had extensive background checks and are authorized with multiple forms of identification including iris and fingerprint scans. In addition Dedoose has validated the physical protection at the facility and security guard staff to ensure a physical compromise of the systems and/or data is incredibly unlikely. Virtual access security is accomplished in multiple steps including a private VPN connection to order to manage the servers with a separate authentication combination for the VPN, as well as each server. Our servers are accessed, configured, and maintained by our in-house and expertly trained engineering staff. We constantly keep the servers up to date and run only the very minimal set of software required to operate Dedoose. In addition, the master encryption key is extremely well guarded and is using well-known and well-tested encryption algorithms as recommended by the National Security Administration for the highest levels of security. (Sociocultural Research Consultants, 2013b, para. 3)

Data analysis. The selection of heuristic inquiry as the overarching qualitative method for this study does not dictate specific procedures for the data analysis phase. Moustakas (1990)

wrote that “methods of heuristic research are open-ended. . . . There is no exclusive list that would be appropriate for every heuristic investigation” (p. 43). I chose to employ applied thematic analysis (ATA; Guest et al., 2011) and thematic content analysis (TCA; Braun & Clarke, 2006) to ensure a transparent and structured process for data analysis.

Guest et al. (2011) defined ATA as “a rigorous, yet inductive, set of procedures designed to identify and examine themes from textual data in a way that is transparent and credible” (p. 15). Text in this study consisted of transcribed interviews and song lyrics, representing “text as proxy for experience” and “text as object for analysis,” respectively (Bernard & Ryan, 1998, p. 595). Textual analysis involves delineating *themes*, defined as “unit[s] of meaning . . . observed (noticed) in the data by a reader of the text” (Guest et al., 2011, p. 50), and then designating *codes*—“textual descriptions of the semantic boundaries of a theme or a component of a theme” (Guest et al., 2011, p. 50)—to reference each theme. *Coding* is “the process by which a qualitative analyst links specific codes to specific data segments” (Guest et al., 2011, p. 50). The outcome is a *codebook*, “a structured compendium of codes that includes a description of how the codes are related to each other” (Guest et al., 2011, p. 50).

ATA is not confined to any particular qualitative research method (Guest et al., 2011). Rather, it requires of the researcher a systematic consideration of many questions related to the design and conduct of research intended to yield textual data for analysis. These include (a) considering the analytic purpose for the study (exploring, explaining, comparing, etc.); (b) ensuring that the analysis directly informs the research question; (c) preparing for how to integrate heterogeneous data types; and (d) determining how coding of the textual data is to be conducted.

Consideration of these questions informed the design of this research in a number of ways. ATA (Guest et al., 2011) calls for the researcher to design an achievable analysis process through assuring a good fit between the intended *view* (or level of abstraction) to be reported on in the write-up and the quality of the data. The analytic purpose in this case was exploratory, and the study aimed to develop an understanding of the nature of the songwriter's creative process, and how composing, recording, and performing original music affected him or her. This suggested a fairly detailed view, with specific information about exactly how a person goes about songwriting and particular effects and outcomes; the interview protocol questions (Appendix A) were designed to ensure that sufficiently detailed data was solicited to allow for the research question to be clearly elucidated.

Interview transcriptions and song lyrics were the two sources of textual data for analysis. The interview included a discussion about the experience of the selected song. The interview data and song lyric data were separately analyzed for each individual. Codes from a particular participant's song lyrics were then compared with the codes from that person's interview to see whether there was consonance or dissonance (or a combination thereof) between the two data sources with regard to the song's theme(s) and reported experience of the nature and origins of the song. The set of the 12 song lyrics was also treated as a sample to be categorized according to the song theme typology I developed as a result of interview responses to question 2c (Appendix A).

ATA (Guest et al., 2011) does not specify a particular coding method for thematic analysis. Rather, a number of dimensions of coding practice are described, and the researcher must then make decisions about each dimension to ensure that the kind of textual analysis undertaken is congruent with the research question and study objective, and that there is

transparency in the process. In particular, coding practices must be defined with regard to how to segment the text, how to relate the segmentation to the coding, and how to develop the codebook. Codebook development requires consideration of what kind of coding will be conducted, how codes will be named and defined, and how themes will be extracted.

The coding practices for this study followed the TCA approach codified by Braun and Clarke (2006). TCA involves six phases that are broadly sequential, although the authors stated that the method is more recursive than linear: (a) familiarizing oneself with the data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming themes; and, (f) producing the report. As was depicted in Figure 1 above, the data analysis phase (comprising ATA and TCA) represents a secondary heuristic inquiry process embedded (or nested) within the overall arc of the research process, itself driven by the steps of heuristic inquiry research. Below, I describe each one of the six phases of TCA and detail how I implemented it in my coding process, along with the heuristic inquiry step(s) associated with that phase of TCA data analysis.

Familiarizing oneself with the data. Phase 1 of the TCA process involves thorough immersion in the data, beginning with transcription (if not done through a transcription service); frequent rereading of the texts to be analyzed; and noting points of interest in the data or initial coding thoughts. This step of the TCA process can be seen to correspond with the immersion phase in heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

Since I did the transcription myself, I had the opportunity to revisit the audio recording of the interview and fully immerse myself in the conversation as I typed. This allowed me to hear the discussion in a new light, and form impressions that were not possible when I was concentrating on directing the flow of the interview and adhering to the protocol. Once the

transcription of an interview was complete, I read the text multiple times. During transcription and reading of the texts, I noted in memos any impressions, coding ideas, and commonalities I observed across interviews as these occurred to me.

Generating initial codes. In Phase 2, initial codes are produced through a thorough and even attention to the data, and captured manually or through software. Braun and Clarke (2006) do not specify a particular method here, such as the line-by-line gerund coding recommended in grounded theory approaches (Charmaz, 2006). Rather, the researcher is encouraged to code liberally, allow for the same segment to receive more than one code if warranted, and keep a little of the surrounding context as part of the extracted segment. Segments that seem to contradict dominant, emerging themes should not be ignored.

I selected Dedoose (Sociocultural Research Consultants, 2013a), a Web-based qualitative data analysis software (QDAS) product, to aid in the thematic content analysis of the data. Dedoose features include upload of text files (and other media); creation of codes and attachment of codes to text excerpts of any length; organization of codes in a hierarchical fashion into a *codetree*; editing of codes at any time; and modification of the codetree, merging codes or moving them within the hierarchy.

I employed a number of coding strategies described in Saldaña (2013). I began with *structural coding*, which “applies a content-based or conceptual phrase representing a topic of inquiry to a segment of data that relates to a specific research question used to frame the interview” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 84). I predefined structural codes in Dedoose, such as *Performing*, *Spirituality*, and *Songwriting Process*. I then employed *subcoding*, the use of “a second-order tag assigned after a primary code to detail or enrich the entry” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 77). Subcodes are sometimes referred to as the *children* of the primary code, which is known as the *parent*. As

I coded, I created new subcodes if the existing ones did not offer appropriate choices for what I intended to code for within a particular excerpt, and assigned them to the appropriate parent or structural code, thus creating a hierarchical relationship. I also used *simultaneous coding*—“the application of two or more different codes to a single qualitative datum, or the overlapped occurrence of two or more codes applied to sequential units of qualitative data” (Saldaña, 2013, p. 80): As I coded, I applied as many subcodes as felt relevant to a given excerpt, as well as creating overlapping excerpts. As I became aware of participants offering responses that could be quantified or assigned a level and thus treated as ordinal or categorical variables, I utilized *magnitude coding*. For example, the age at which a person began learning to play his or her first musical instrument may be quantified, and the existence of a connection between songwriting and spirituality may be assigned a category (yes, no, maybe). This strategy “adds a supplemental alphanumeric or symbolic code or subcode to an existing coded datum or category to indicate its intensity, frequency, direction, presence, or evaluative content” (Saldaña, 2013, pp. 72-73). I coded for negative or nontransformative experiences and other material that seemed to contradict my assumptions or challenge my biases.

I chose to use a very granular approach, coding small segments, applying several simultaneous codes to a given excerpt, and choosing words or phrases that closely matched the original text. This was a conscious decision, taken to preserve the nuance of the interview responses. This resulted in a large number of subcodes, structured hierarchically under the primary structural codes. This TCA phase continued the immersion phase of the embedded heuristic inquiry process, as I remained deeply engaged with the data.

Searching for themes. Phase 3 of TCA is concerned with “starting to analyse your codes and considering how different codes may combine to form an overarching theme” (Braun &

Clarke, 2006, p. 89). This begins the process of abstracting from individual codes to derive higher level meanings from the coded data. Braun and Clarke recommended using visual tools like mindmaps to help capture possible relationships between codes. It may be that such relationships also become clear through a more intuitive process, as described in the incubation and illumination phases of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990).

After I completed the initial coding process, I turned my attention to writing chapter 4, which characterizes the participants' demographic and songwriting backgrounds. Although a good portion of the chapter utilized data from the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D), I had noted in memos material coded in the interviews that might have value for chapter 4. At this point, I focused exclusively on the portion of the codetree under the structural code of *Development*, and reflected on that set of codes, looking for commonalities that might allow for further levels of abstraction. This led to creation of new subcodes beneath the Development code, such as *Musical Skills* and *Key Milestones*, and reassignment of existing lower level subcodes to these new midlevel subcodes in the codetree hierarchy. Reflecting on the codes under Musical Skills and Key Milestones inspired me to present certain data in chapter 4 about the songwriting and musicianship characteristics of participants, and to solicit from all participants via e-mail explicit ages at which key milestones were attained, once it became clear that such codes were not present in each interview and would be useful to summarize.

While I was absorbed in perusing the Development subtree and writing chapter 4, I set aside the rest of the codetree. This is analogous to the incubation step in heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), during which time the "researcher retreats from the intense, concentrated focus on the question" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 28). When I returned to the analysis of codes pertinent to the research question, I experienced and found myself moving into the heuristic

inquiry step of illumination—“a breakthrough into conscious awareness of qualities and a clustering of qualities into themes inherent in the question” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). I began intuitively to understand how the large number of subcodes and subtrees I had created under the structural codes were related and might be aggregated or merged into higher level themes. Following Moustakas (1990), I trusted “tacit workings to uncover meanings and essences” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 29). I used expressive arts modalities to explore and further illuminate the emerging themes and their relationship to the research question, through drawing, dance, and music-making, sometimes combining all three. I displayed my artwork where I could interact with it casually in passing. I wrote additional memos. I took walks in nature and engaged in meditative trail running, allowing the codes and tentative themes to move through me, and suggest new patterns and associations. I drew large maps relating the codes I was proposing aggregating into the various themes, and took mini incubation breaks away from the maps, before returning to see whether they still felt valid. Many times, I rejected the map and continued to engage the coded data and provisional themes in the ways above until new relationships suggested themselves. I returned to the memos to remind myself of my emerging awareness of themes, and created new memos as new insights became available to me. When I felt comfortable with the current map, I modified the codetree in Dedoose (Sociocultural Research Consultants, 2013a) to align it with the emerging themes, for example aggregating several codes under a higher level and newly created code representing a theme.

Reviewing themes. In Phase 4 of TCA, the researcher takes the preliminary themes identified and conducts two levels of review. To begin with, she or he returns to the coded extracts for each theme to check that all extracts fit within the theme coherently. If not, then either a return to coding is suggested or particular themes must be renounced, subdivided, or

modified to incorporate or exclude certain codes. The second level of review involves a testing of the tentative *thematic map* (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91), which captures the relationship between themes, to see whether the themes are indeed representative of the dataset, taken as a whole.

In this phase of TCA, I engaged in the illumination step, continuing to be influenced by tacit ways of knowing as I assessed the fit with the themes as defined. I also began the explication step in the embedded heuristic inquiry process, engaging more analytically with the structure of the codetree and resulting relationships. I exported the codetree with associated excerpts for each theme, and reviewed the excerpts to see whether they fit with the theme. In some cases, I recoded an excerpt to house it under a different theme in the codetree. In others, I merged themes or set them aside as being too tenuously supported by the underlying data. I adjusted the thematic map to match these modifications.

Defining and naming themes. In Phase 5 of TCA, the researcher takes the thematic map concretized in Phase 4 and organizes the themes “into a coherent and internally consistent account, with accompanying narrative” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92). This requires writing a detailed description of each theme, which captures its essence, and illustrating how the theme fits into the broader “story” being told about the data. It may make sense to create subthemes where the relationships are complex and suggest a hierarchical structure.

This phase continued the explication step of the embedded heuristic inquiry process begun in Phase 4, with ongoing examination of what had been brought into conscious awareness through the prior steps of incubation and illumination. I began to draft descriptions of each theme for chapter 5, which presents my findings.

Producing the report. In the final phase of TCA, the researcher generates a written report, which is “a concise, coherent, logical, nonrepetitive and interesting account of the story the data tell—within and across themes” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 93). Good write-ups include vivid quotes from the texts to bring the themes to life, and go beyond pure description of the data to make an argument with regard to the research question under consideration. This required continuing my work on chapter 5, providing a detailed description of the structure of the thematic map, its hierarchy, and its themes, supporting each theme with quotes from the coded excerpts.

The combination of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), applied thematic analysis (Guest et al., 2011), and thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), as described above, provided a robust set of procedures for conducting the research. The following section addresses ways in which I made best efforts to ensure that the study was credible and dependable.

Credibility and Dependability Considerations

The concepts of *validity*—defined as representing “accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorize” (Hammersley, 1987, p. 69) and *reliability*—“whether or not you get the same answer by using an instrument to measure something more than once” (Bernard, 2000, p. 47)—were born of the quantitative research tradition. Researchers have argued that other terms are more appropriate for qualitative studies (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Golafshani, 2003). *Credibility* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) is frequently used as an alternative to validity in qualitative research, defined as “confidence in the truth of the findings, including an accurate understanding of the context” (Ulin, Robinson, & Tolley, 2005, p. 25). According to Moustakas (1990), credibility in research conducted with the heuristic inquiry method is enhanced if “the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one’s own

rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present[s] comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the experience” (p. 32). Reliability as defined in quantitative research is less relevant for qualitative research, for three reasons. First, qualitative studies do not involve measurement. Second, replication of a study is typically not a goal of qualitative research, which emphasizes description. Third, the frequent use of semi-structured interviews means that the exact line of questioning depends on the individual, and thus varies across participants. In addition, the flow of the interview may also be context-dependent, such that a given individual’s responses may be expected to vary over time (Guest et al., 2011, p. 84). A more appropriate construct is *dependability* (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), defined by Ulin et al. (2005) as “whether the research process is consistent and carried out with careful attention to the rules and conventions of qualitative methodology” (p. 26).

Credibility in qualitative research may be enhanced through transparency of the researcher’s process (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Guest et al. (2011) recommended employing practices intended to enhance credibility in the design and conduct of each phase of the study. Dependability may be increased through a certain level of structure (without being so constricting as to limit the discovery process) and through consistent application of the data collection and analysis protocols (Guest et al., 2011).

I took a number of measures to enhance the credibility and dependability of this research. It was conducted by a single researcher (me), using a semi-structured interview protocol, which would be expected to enhance dependability through offering a consistent data collection process and enough structure to ensure a certain level of consistency in the data gathered from each participant. I systematically pursued thematic coding, following Braun and Clarke (2006) and Guest et al. (2011), and utilized QDAS software, to allow for the development of a precise and

detailed codebook, and the creation of an audit trail. I engaged in *memo-writing* (Guest et al., 2011) through the data collection and analysis phases to render my process as transparent as possible and contribute to the audit trail. In other practices designed to enhance credibility, I was mindful of attending carefully to data that appeared to contradict emerging themes or my stated biases about the likely transformative effect of songwriting. My thematic interpretations are supported by quotes from the participants, such that the commitment to an inductive, data-driven research process was maintained.

Member checking (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011; Moustakas, 1990) is a practice often employed to enhance credibility in qualitative research, whereby the primary researcher returns to participants at different points in the process to seek input as to whether the summarized data accurately reflects participants' intents and meanings. This may be done once interviews are transcribed but most commonly occurs following thematic content analysis, with participants reviewing the themes derived from the data. I considered the use of member checking for this study and ruled it out for two reasons. First, member checking with participants who are active musicians is impractical to implement: Musicians travel frequently and often have unpredictable and irregular schedules that can be extremely demanding physically, emotionally, and mentally, making it very difficult to guarantee timely review of research findings. Second, in contrast to unsupervised research, in doctoral research the candidate's dissertation committee members review the findings in detail prior to acceptance and approval of the study, offering three highly qualified perspectives on the credibility of the results and conclusions, and requiring revisions where credibility is lacking.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored in detail the research method selected for the study, explaining my philosophical stance and the rationale for my choice, along with core theoretical principles of the method and specific application to the research question under consideration. Precise procedures for the recruitment and selection of participants were outlined, and procedures employed for data collection, handling, and analysis were described. Credibility and ethical considerations were addressed.

Chapter 4: Participant Demographics and Profiles

This chapter summarizes the results of participant recruitment and the characteristics and demographics of the 12 participants, taken in aggregate. I then profile each participant's background as a musician and songwriter, drawing from the response to the first question in my interview protocol (Appendix A), which asked explicitly about the way in which songwriting and musicianship had developed over the participant's lifetime. The final section presents one theme that emerged from the Thematic Content Analysis procedure (chapter 3) that relates to the participants' experience of navigating their relationship to professionalizing their musical activities. I include this here because of its strong connection with demographic and profile data depicting the musical development of the songwriters in my study.

Recruitment Results

The recruitment process produced a total of 16 potential participants, of which 12 were accepted into the study. Four candidates were rejected for failing to meet the screening criteria. Two of the 12 participants required further qualification before they were admitted to the study. One participant responded affirmatively to screening question SCR14 (see Appendix D) regarding whether she wrote her songs primarily for individual or community spiritual practices. Although such a response had been intended to exclude a person from the study, upon further discussion I determined that the content of her songs was expressing her personal spirituality and that her natural audience for performances was venues where attendees would be appreciative of her music. In practice, these were often spiritual gatherings. I decided that since her songs were an authentic expression of what felt most important for her to share, that this was acceptable for the study. A second individual responded affirmatively to the screening question SCR13 regarding whether her songwriting was primarily concerned with creation of songs for theatre or

film. This was also intended as an exclusion response but when I sought more background, I learned that this individual had had a varied range of songwriting expression and content through her career and that she had plenty of songwriting background that was not related to writing for musicals and theatre. For this reason, I accepted her into the study. The remainder of this chapter presents the demographics and autobiographical profiles of the 12 participants I interviewed between August and December 2013.

Participant Demographics

All 12 participants opted to use either their real name or publicly known stage name rather than selecting a pseudonym for the study. At the conclusion of the interview, I offered each participant the option to reverse this decision and choose a pseudonym if he or she felt that the content and experience of the interview conversation had in any way changed his or her comfort level with the decision to use a publicly identifiable name; no participant elected to do so. Since the screening conversation took place on a different day from the interview for all participants, and the elapsed time between the two was as much as a month in some cases, I reviewed the list of demographic items I had gathered at screening with each participant after concluding the interview to refresh his or her memory as to which data had been collected. I then asked whether there was any item the participant would not want personally associated with him or her. Two participants requested not to have income data associated with them individually; to honor this request and treat participants consistently I decided to present income data in aggregate only for the sample as a whole.

Primary demographics. All of the participants (100%) lived in the United States, with 8 participants (67%) living in Northern California. One participant (8%) lived in New Jersey, two (17%) in Colorado, and one (8%) in North Carolina. Given the purposive sampling approach

taken, the fact that I live in the San Francisco Bay Area, and that recruitment proved to be more effective through personal contacts than through broader marketing of the study in electronic media, it is not surprising to find this geographic distribution of participants. Of those now resident in California, only five (42%) are native Californians. Participants grew up in eight states: California, Colorado, Florida, New York, Ohio, Utah, Virginia, and Washington, DC.

Participants were equally divided along gender lines and ranged in age from 35 to 69 years with a mean of 54.7 years (Table 1). Three quarters (75%) of participants were aged 50 or above, likely reflecting the effects of my own age (early 50s) and the sampling strategy, which involved significant networking among my contacts. While this limits the study by excluding the experience of more youthful songwriters, it does have the advantage of capturing the perspectives of those with many years of songwriting practice.

Table 1

Participants by Gender and Age (N = 12)

Age	Women (<i>n</i> = 6)		Men (<i>n</i> = 6)		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
30–39	1	8%	1	8%	2	16%
40–49	1	8%	0	0%	1	8%
50–59	2	17%	2	17%	4	34%
60–69	2	17%	3	25%	5	42%
Total	6	50%	6	50%	12	100%

With regard to race, the participant pool was very homogeneous, with 10 participants (83%) identifying as white or Caucasian. One participant (8%) identified as Asian (Chinese-American) and one (8%) as African-American. All participants were either partnered (42%) or

married (58%). Two of the participants (17%) were married to each other. I asked them not to discuss their responses to the interview with each other until each of them had concluded their interview with me.

The participants were highly educated overall (Table 2): 75% of participants had a bachelor's degree or higher. Women participants had higher educational attainment. All women (100%) in the study had college degrees, while three men (50%) in the study had not completed college. Two thirds of women had some level of graduate education. This was true of only one man (20%).

Table 2

Highest Degree of Education Achieved by Gender (N = 12)

Highest degree	Women (n = 6)		Men (n = 6)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
High School or GED	0	0%	1	8%	1	8%
Some college	0	0%	2	17%	2	17%
Bachelor's degree	2	17%	2	17%	4	34%
Some graduate school	1	8%	0	0%	1	8%
Master's degree	2	17%	1	8%	3	25%
Doctorate	1	8%	0	0%	1	8%
Total	6	50%	6	50%	12	100%

Participants were asked to identify within which range their household income fell (Table 3). Three quarters of participants (75%) reported household income of greater than \$50,000 annually. U. S. median household earned income in 2012 was \$51,017 and the average was

\$71,274 (U. S. Census Bureau, 2013). Thus, it appears that participants' household incomes were mostly weighted toward the upper half of the U. S. household income distribution

Table 3

Household Income (N = 12)

Household income (annual)	<i>n</i>	%
\$26,000 – \$50,000	3	25%
\$51,000 – \$75,000	3	25%
\$76,000 – \$100,000	4	34%
\$101,000 – \$150,000	1	8%
> \$150,000	1	8%
Total	12	100%

Participants generally did not identify with mainstream religions such as Christianity, Judaism, or Islam (Table 4). One participant (8%) identified as Christian and one (8%) as Buddhist (although he had affiliated himself with many different religions prior to his current orientation). Eighty-three percent of the participants identified as *spiritual not religious* or *other*. Those specifying other defined their orientations respectively as nature-based, agnostic, Native-American and women's spirituality, esoteric earth-based pan-religion, eclectic, and personal. It is interesting to compare these data with the Pew Forum (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008) survey on religious affiliations in the United States, which found that 78% of adults were Christian, whereas each of the following classifications within the *Other faiths* category represented less than 0.3% of American adults: *spiritual but not religious*; *eclectic, a bit of everything, own beliefs*; and *Native American religions*. The survey separately categorized 16.1% of American adults as unaffiliated with any particular religion. In this group, 70% responded affirmatively to the question, "Do you believe in God or a universal spirit?" (The Pew

Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008, p. 20) and 5.8% were defined as *religious unaffiliated*, for whom “religion is somewhat important or very important in their lives” (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008, p. 20). One might argue that the taxonomy of the Pew survey is confusing to interpret for those identifying as affiliated or believing in something outside of the world’s major religions. Nonetheless, it is clear that my sample represented a significant divergence from the religious and spiritual profile of American adults, taken as a whole.

Table 4

Religious or Spiritual Orientation by Gender (N = 12)

Religion/Spiritual Orientation	Women (n = 6)		Men (n = 6)		Total	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Spiritual Not Religious	2	34%	2	34%	4	68%
Buddhist	0	0%	1	8%	1	8%
Christian	0	2%	1	8%	1	8%
Other	4	0%	2	2%	6	2%
Total	6	50%	6	50%	12	100%

Participants were asked to give their occupation in the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D). Nine participants (75%) included “musician” or “songwriter” or “composer” in their response. The 3 participants (25%) not defining themselves professionally as songwriter-musicians reported their occupations as Director of Marketing; vocal coach and expressive arts counselor; and retired counselor for veterans and retail manager. Several participants added one or more secondary occupations, including retired teacher, herbalist, humor writer, sawmill

owner, elected official, music producer, and community activist. All participants (100%) had at least one parent with a professional occupation (Table 5).

Table 5

Participants' Parental Occupations (N = 12)

Mother's Occupation	Father's Occupation	Step-parent's Occupation
Creativity coach, teacher	Magazine editor	
Homemaker and volunteer	Wine business	
Children's singer and songwriter	Filmmaker	Music and entertainment lawyer
Housewife	Sawmill owner	
Homemaker	Bank vice president	
Homemaker and artist	General contractor	Electronics design
Bookkeeper		
Housewife	Minister, college administrator	
Banker	Postal carrier	
Journalist	Optometrist	
Artist, painter, sculptor	Businessman	
Production control	Computers, production control manager	

Musicianship and songwriting characteristics. As part of the screening process using the Demographic Questionnaire (Appendix D), I asked participants about aspects of their songwriting and musical experience. I also solicited additional data through e-mail regarding the age at which participants had begun certain activities, when my first round of coding

participants' discussion of their musical development in interview transcriptions suggested that it might be interesting to aggregate data more systematically in this area.

Table 6 summarizes salient characteristics of participants' songwriting productivity. Participants reported extensive experience with songwriting, with a mean number of years of writing songs of 36.3. This follows logically from the participants' average age in the mid 50s, coupled with the early age of commencement of songwriting ($M = 8.9$, $SD = 4.8$). In reviewing the interview transcripts, I realized that participants differentiated between their earliest attempts at songwriting and what many considered the writing of "real" songs, hence I asked them to furnish data for the age at which both such events occurred. (I did not pursue what participants meant by "real"; however, my impression was that this descriptor applied to songs that the songwriters would consider of a form and quality worthy of inclusion in their lifetime repertoire, despite being perhaps less mature in their content or lyrical or musical sophistication.) Only 1 participant (8%) said these occurred at the same age. The mean age for writing the first "real" song was 17.8, and the mean elapsed time between the two events was 8.9 years; thus, in aggregate, participants experienced a significant gap between their first indications and mature expression of their songwriting ability. Participants wrote an average of 315 songs over their lifetime, but the large standard deviation ($SD = 329.7$) points to the high variability in productivity: Lifetime songwriting output ranged from 30 to 1,000. In the last 2 years, participants wrote an average of 21.7 songs, again with high variability ($SD = 18.9$), with a range of 3 to 65 songs. All participants (100%) write both lyrics and music.

Table 6

Songwriting Productivity (N = 12)

	M	SD
Years songwriting	36.3	10.8
Lifetime songs written	315.4	329.7
Songs written, last 2 years	21.7	18.9
Age of writing first song	8.9	4.8
Age of writing first “real” song	17.8	5.6
Elapsed years between first song and first “real” song	8.8	7.7

The songwriter-musicians in my study generally exhibited early engagement with musical activities and demonstration of musical abilities (see Table 7). Starting to sing and beginning to play a first instrument typically occurred prior to or during elementary school. Since all participants (100%) had at least one parent with a professional occupation, it seems likely that they grew up in middle-class families and had access to schools with some funding for the arts, or parents willing to pay for private lessons. A second instrument was begun an average of 5.5 years after the first, typically in middle school. Participants played an average of 5.5 instruments, including vocals. Ninety-two percent played guitar, 75% played piano. Other instruments reported were drums, bass guitar, flute, harmonica, saxophone, autoharp, recorder, organ, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, keyboard synthesizers, guitar synthesizers, banjo, ukulele, accordion, glockenspiel, mandolin, and unspecified percussive instruments. Participants typically began making music collaboratively in some kind of band or singing group in their teen years in junior high or high school.

Table 7

Musical Development (N = 12)

	M	SD
Age started singing	7.0	5.3
Number of instruments played, including vocals	5.5	2.8
Age started playing first instrument	6.5	2.0
Age started playing second instrument	12.0	6.6
Elapsed years between first and second instrument	5.5	6.4
Age of playing in first band	15.2	8.0

Participants also had many years of performing experience ($M = 35.3$, $SD = 15.9$). Many reported performing multiple nights a week, with an average annual number of performances over the last 2 years of 55.8 ($SD = 68.8$). Eight participants (67%) reported performing their original songs with a band currently, with these bands being formed between 1 and 26 years ago.

Many participants noted the difficulty of defining the primary musical genre of their songs. Four participants (33%) identified this as “singer-songwriter,” with three of the four adding qualifying descriptors, including “acoustic,” “rock-influenced,” and “mix of folk, pop, rock.” Several participants referenced a combination of genres, such as pop, folk, rock, Americana, jazz, funk, and R&B. Two participants (17%) apparently focused on the emotional tone or their intent for their listeners in their conceptualizations, describing their genres as “positive music” and “positive and fun, upbeat, dance.” In general, it appears that participants felt constrained by a requirement to categorize their musical expression by genre, and, if forced into so doing, found ways to create new categories, blur lines between genres, or focus on the quality or intent of their music rather than its form.

All participants (100%) write music as well as lyrics. Two (17%) write some lyrics in Spanish as well as English. Three participants (25%) reported cowriting songs. Six (50%) said that they sometimes cowrite, and three (25%) said that they do not cowrite at all.

Participant Profiles

In this section, I present each participant in my study in alphabetical order by last name. Question 1 of my interview protocol (Appendix A) asked participants to describe how they first became interested in being musicians and songwriters and how that developed through their lifetime. A follow-up question prompted for a description of current musical and songwriting activities. I drew from this material to formulate a profile of each participant.

Rita Abrams. Rita is a 69-year-old Caucasian woman who lives in the North San Francisco Bay Area. She has been writing songs for 55 years and estimated she had written about 1,000 songs in that time, with perhaps 30 in the last 2 years. Rita sings, and plays piano, guitar, autoharp, and recorder. She performs about 20 times a year to audiences averaging a couple hundred people, and has been performing for 43 years. She defined her primary musical genre as “musical theatre, pop, and children’s songs.”

Rita recalled, “I always wrote verses and poems, as a very young child. And funny ones for people’s birthdays.” She began piano lessons at about 7, and “studied classical piano through high school, and I was just very musical.” As a very “sensitive little girl,” she found that her early gift with words allowed her to express her feelings through poems and, later, song lyrics. She recalled writing her first song at about 14. Rita wrote her songs at the piano, accompanying herself singing, and started a girls’ singing group in her teens. Her mother had wanted her to study music in college, but she majored in English because she felt “like I had to do my own thing.” However, she continued to write songs, play piano, and also learned guitar. After

college, she was in a program for teaching emotionally disturbed children, and considered becoming a music therapist after seeing how musical improvisation helped an autistic boy whom she was tutoring to express himself verbally. She began teaching preschool, continued songwriting, and was “in a girls’ band.” She moved to Mill Valley, California, and “just decided that the town should have a song and that I should write it simply enough for my kindergartners to sing.” Her song “Mill Valley” became a hit song, with articles about her and her class (which had been featured singing on the recording) in *Newsweek*, *Time*, and *Rolling Stone* magazines. She released an album of original songs. Her success meant that she was in a position to leave the teaching field and pursue music professionally: “And all these years, I’ve just been making my living, or trying to make my living at times, doing mainly music.” She has also written humor books and greeting cards. During the first part of her career in music, Rita wrote some popular songs, but mostly she created children’s songs for “a lot of children’s series and programs and cassettes and albums and CDs, and some film scores for children’s films.” Later, she wrote mostly for adult audiences. She has won two Emmy awards. She has written the songs for a number of musicals, and described her current musical activities as:

more and more towards musical theatre, and that is very compatible with my musical affinities and style and sensibilities. And I write a lot of comedy. . . . My comedy songs are very strong in that they make people roar with laughter.

Don Caruth. Don is a 50-year-old African-American man living on the Central Coast of California. He has been writing songs for 35 years, and has written 30 songs in his lifetime, three in the past couple of years. His primary instrument is guitar, and he also plays bass and drums. He has been performing for 43 years; for the last 26 years, he has been the lead singer and guitarist of the Joint Chiefs. The band performed about 250 times annually over the last couple of years, to audiences averaging 60 people, and as large as 1,200. He described his primary musical genre as “jazz, funk, R&B.”

Don's father was a minister, and he joked that he was "in church 8 days a week!" He saw an uncle playing guitar in church and was immediately captivated. His father bought him his first guitar when Don was 7, and Don said "I used to take it to church and I just sat up and played with the choir. They just let me play. I didn't know what I was doing. I was just messing around." He was also expected to sing as part of family musical performances at the church from the age of 7. Largely self-taught on guitar, Don formed casual bands to play cover songs in his teens and enhance his skills. After high school, he was "in a lot of trouble" and stopped playing music for several years, not even owning a guitar. Although he reported that he had "had ideas [for songs] ever since I started playing," Don started songwriting seriously only in his late 20s. At this time, as a new parent, he was staying home a lot, playing music, and began jamming again with friends. The Joint Chiefs was born from these jam sessions, and the band began recording and performing a combination of covers and originals, many of which were Don's songs. Don defined his focus very simply: "I play music, I'm a musician." He delights in variety and said, "I play everything. . . . Jazz, blues, R&B, funk. . . . I like so many kinds of music. I couldn't play just one thing." Don particularly loves performing, which he described as:

Heaven! That's where I belong! . . . I used to have dreams when I was a kid . . . of being in front of all those people. I didn't know what those dreams meant, but I do now. It's where I belong. It's where I'm supposed to be. It's the gift God gave me and I want to share it with everybody because it doesn't do any good to keep it to yourself. . . . I love to play music. It's my life.

Nick Gallant. Nick is a 35-year-old Caucasian man who lives on the Central California coast. He estimated that he had written 150 songs in his lifetime, and about 65 in the last couple of years. He has written songs for 23 years. Besides being a vocalist, Nick plays many instruments, including guitar, bass, drums, percussion, banjo, ukulele, accordion, piano, and harmonica. He performs about six times a year to audiences averaging about 35 people, and has

been performing for 20 years. He defined his primary musical genre as “singer-songwriter of acoustic music.”

Nick remembered “falling in love with music, as many people do, at around age 9,” while watching a Guns N’ Roses video. He recounted seeing “all these guys playing guitars and there are all these girls around them and I’m, like, ‘Oh my god, I want to do that!’” He borrowed a guitar from relatives, and found that it was “a very instant fit for me.” He began lessons, and recalled practicing at least an hour a day from fifth grade on. Nick’s parents “were really supportive but they definitely didn’t push me into it, so it was all sort of intrinsically motivated.” He noted that he “got really interested in music that’s songwriting-driven,” particularly the songs of the Beatles and Simon & Garfunkel, and that he wrote his first song in eighth grade about a homeless man, which he remembers to this day. By high school, he was “putting together bands and being the primary songwriter for the bands . . . and writing songs in different genres. I was in kind of a rock band, I was in sort of a funk/jazz band, and I was still writing songs on the acoustic guitar . . . and then adapting them to band arrangements.” It was also while in high school that Nick began learning to play other instruments, including bass guitar and drums, which enabled him to make his first recording of an original song as a senior, playing all the parts. He got a bachelor’s degree in music, with a focus on classical guitar performance, and continued learning to play new instruments, writing songs (often with his brother), “learning how to produce those people that I was recording,” and playing in bands. He began teaching elementary school music after college and recorded his first album in 2001. Shortly thereafter, Nick figured out that he wanted to move into the music industry and professionalize his production skills “so I could realize my songs the way I wanted to.” He completed a music production engineering program, while playing in a band that performed frequently and for

which he wrote all the songs. Nick then began a career combining his skills as a multi-instrumentalist, composer, songwriter, and music producer to record cover versions of famous popular songs for use in play-along rock band video games, and to write music for films, TV, and video games. He won an Emmy for music he composed for a chemistry series on TV. Since 2008, he has produced three albums of his original songs, and has become more serious about marketing his music: With the impending launch of the third album, Nick said “it’s the first time in my life where I feel I really am taking it seriously and getting behind my music and actually trying to fulfill my dreams in a way, not in just a halfhearted sort of way.”

When asked to describe his current musical and songwriting activities, Nick said:

I’m a singer-songwriter and have spent a lot of my professional career being a multi-instrumentalist session musician and doing a lot of professional music. But right now at my core as an artist what I’m all about is being a singer-songwriter who’s self-produced and is trying to get my music out into the world.

Jan Garrett. Jan is a 68-year-old Caucasian woman who lives in Colorado. She is married to JD Martin, who also participated in this study. Jan has been writing songs for 40 years, and estimated she had written 500 in her lifetime, and about 25 in the last couple of years. She is a jazz singer and also plays piano, guitar, mandolin, and percussion. She has been performing for 60 years, and currently gives about 45 performances a year to audiences of 20 to 500 people. She described her musical genre as “positive music.”

Jan said, “I really feel like I came out singing and dancing, you know? . . . I come from a musical family and it was just second nature . . . to play music and to sing.” She recalled learning a few chords on a “baby ukulele” as her very first instrument and sitting around the piano singing with her family. She begged to take piano lessons and began at 6, with formal classical instruction. Although Jan chafed with the demands of reading music, finding herself much more motivated to find chords and play by ear, she did benefit from “a really good

classical musical education, solid, all the way through school,” which included choral singing. She remembered “playing music with friends and figuring out harmony parts,” and, by seventh grade, had “a little singing group I had brought together and we just sang pop tunes.” She continued making music with others through high school, “folk and some rock and roll and that kind of stuff. But it was mostly guitars and vocal harmonies . . . it was just one of the most fun things that I did.” She went to college intending to major in music, but found the music program “so stiff and so serious” that she changed her mind after 3 days and ended up majoring in French. Through college, she performed as a jazz singer and also in a band that played gigs on weekends, and “since that time when I was 20 years old, I’ve always been in bands or somehow or other making my living playing music and singing.” She recorded and toured with John Denver and Steve Martin, and joined the Dirt Band for their 1977 Soviet Tour. Although Jan recalled writing some songs while she was playing in her college band, she felt she “had nothing to say that was anything more interesting than the . . . overload of too much home-written music that I didn’t think was that great.” By her late 20s, she felt she had undergone sufficient personal and spiritual growth to have something to offer, and “from that place, I felt that I could write something of worth.” She currently writes, records, and performs original music with her husband, most frequently as a duo. Together, they have recorded seven CDs and their songs have won awards from the Positive Music Association and acclaim at the Indie International Songwriting Competition. In describing her musical focus, she said:

The music that I write is what I would call uplifting . . . eclectic. It’s universal . . . I’m writing soul music that connects people with who they really are and inspires them to bring themselves into the world in whatever way is theirs. . . . I want to be the solution not the problem.

Gregory Irish. Gregory is a 52-year-old Caucasian man who lives in New Jersey. He estimated that he has written 35 songs in his lifetime, with almost all being written within the last

couple of years. He wrote his first song 37 years ago. He plays piano and guitar, as well as singing. He performs about 15 times a year to audiences of 15 to 40 people, and has been performing for 2 years. He defined his primary musical genre as singer-songwriter, with a mix of folk, pop, and rock.

Gregory described his parents as being “musically inclined.” He and his siblings all learned to play instruments. At about 10, he showed interest in playing his father’s old guitar and experimented with making chords. His stepfather bought him a guitar of his own, and he tried taking lessons from a couple of teachers, but was disappointed to find that the music they were emphasizing was not very contemporary, and he concluded that he would do better to teach himself using songbooks with chords. By about 15 or 16 he was “putting my own chords together and making my own songs and coming up with my own feelings”; however, he no longer has any of the songs he wrote in his youth. As a young man, he “fell in with the wrong crowd and so there was a big gap in writing songs.” Gregory joined the Navy before completing high school. He continued to play guitar: “The guitar was always there, I always picked it up when I felt lonely or in need of solitude.” He resumed songwriting after a long hiatus, to express his feelings about the challenges of parenting a child diagnosed with Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder. Three years ago, friends who were in a band learned of Gregory’s earlier songwriting and his love of playing guitar, and encouraged him to go to an open microphone event and start performing, which he did. He said, “I just got inspired by other people and other musicians around me and started writing more songs about my current life.” He recorded a CD with these songs, and has continued to write and perform since then. As he put it, “right now it’s basically open mic and stay-at-home singer-songwriter work on songs.” Gregory finds songwriting integral to his desire to understand his experience:

I'm the kind of person likes questioning everything. . . . If things don't make sense to me, I will question you to death. . . . I just question until I have an answer that I want to put down on paper. And then I'll work some music out to go with it.

Dede Kittenhead. Dede is a 44-year-old Chinese-American woman who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has written about 600 to 700 songs in her lifetime, about 45 in the last 2 years, and has been writing songs for 37 years. Dede sings, and also plays piano, guitar, bass, glockenspiel, and mandolin. She has performed for 40 years, and currently gives about 25 performances annually with her band, Kittenhead, to audiences of between three and 150 people, typically averaging about 70. She described her primary musical genre as pop and rock.

Dede “started gravitating towards music at a really young age. . . . Music started for me when I was age 5. So I came from a musical family.” Eager to please her mother, who wanted her to learn piano, she began taking lessons at age 5, and added guitar lessons at 6. From early childhood, she was “always put in front of people,” whether in beauty pageants, public speaking, or meeting the President, and seemed to have “some kind of charisma.” She wrote her first song in second grade, and began playing in punk rock bands in junior high school. She continued to write songs for her bands, “even though I didn’t know how to,” and then “started studying music theory and went off to a couple of summer schools, and then I realized what I was doing was right and it was just being more formalized.” Although music was her passion, Dede studied business in college and graduate school and pursued a corporate career, continuing to write and play music as a hobby. Having achieved her professional goals in the business world, she has “come back to music full steam.” She is currently exploring “strategic ways to make money” with music, including “writing music for other people,” for use in film scores or video games. She writes, records, and performs with the all-female punk band Kittenhead, and dreams of writing a rock opera. Her passion is in connecting with her audience:

Performing should be about this message and the song I want you to hear, like I'm going to present it to you in a visual as well as audio-sensory method. I want to communicate to you. If I can't get you to cry when I'm being sad, if I can't get you to be happy when I'm being happy, if I can't get you to be upset or angry with me, then I'm not doing my job.

Russ Leal. Russ is a 61-year-old Caucasian man who lives on the Central California coast. He has been writing songs for 25 years, and estimated that he had written 60 in his lifetime and six within the last 2 years. He writes lyrics in Spanish as well as English. He is a vocalist and plays guitar, flute, harmonica, saxophone, bass guitar, and drums. He has been performing for 30 years, and his band, Extra Large, currently performs about 100 times a year to audiences ranging from 50 to 3,000 people. He described his musical genre as “positive and fun upbeat dance music.”

Russ's father was a professional musician and in the family's home music “was always around the house. It was what was there.” Russ picked up his father's flute when he was in fourth or fifth grade and found he “just could play it.” He began flute lessons and then “picked up” other instruments through middle school and high school. He experimented very casually with songwriting in college but, as a Division One football player on a scholarship, his sports and studies came ahead of his music. He majored in history, with a minor in music, completed graduate studies in history and special education, and began what was to become a 32-year career as a high school special education teacher. He recalled, “I seriously started writing as we started having bands in my late 20s.” Russ wrote what he considered his first song while playing in a student-teacher band. He heard one of the students playing about with a simple chord progression and found that it inspired him to go home and write lyrics and melody. His current band, Extra Large, formed 25 years ago and has been voted the best band in Santa Cruz County over 10 times by the readers of three local newspapers. Russ is the main songwriter and lead

singer for the band, which records and performs many of his original songs. His motivation is to positively affect his audience:

The purpose of our music is to make people feel good, you know? And I think being right there with them is the way to do it, giving everything you have and giving them good songs. The main theme for me is positive. . . . It's always been my feeling that I would rather have people leaving going, "That made me feel good. . . . I felt like the music lifted me up, I felt like the performance lifted me up, and I feel better for it."

JD Martin. JD is a 65-year-old Caucasian man who lives in Colorado. He is married to Jan Garrett, who is also a participant in this study. He has been writing songs for 45 years and has written 750 songs over his lifetime, with about 20 in the last 2 years. He is a vocalist and also plays guitar and piano, and can create drum and bass tracks for recording purposes. He has been performing for 50 years, and gives about 50 performances annually to audiences ranging from 20 to thousands of people, "often really large." He described his musical genre as hard to place but as "rock-influenced singer-songwriter."

JD apparently displayed a precocious interest in songwriting: "My mom says that I made up songs when I was a little kid, you know, and I don't particularly remember that!" His father was a Mennonite minister, and JD grew up steeped in the musical tradition of that community, learning to sing all the different vocal parts in four-part a cappella music. He began piano lessons at age 8 and remembered one of his first teachers helping him to develop his interest in songwriting: "I'd already been able to pick out melodies and he showed me how to put chords with melodies and play by ear." He continued classical piano lessons through high school and college, learned to play guitar, and started playing in bands. Although he wrote his first song in high school, JD said his songwriting took off when, pursuing a music education and voice major in college, a professor assigned a songwriting project: "That was what really opened the door, because I had such a wonderful time with it and got a really nice response to it." He served as the main songwriter for the band Tanglefoot in his 20s, and moved in 1980 to Nashville,

Tennessee in the hopes of becoming a professional songwriter. “Maybe a year after I got there, I was able to get a job as a staff writer with a publishing company,” he recalled. He spent 13 years writing country music songs in Nashville then moved to Los Angeles to write for the pop market. JD wrote or cowrote five number 1 and 10 top-10 hit singles for other artists, and has won over 15 awards for excellence in songwriting from the American Society of Composers, Authors, and Publishers. After 20 years of writing songs for others, he began to focus on recording and performing his own music and recorded a solo CD. JD currently writes, records, and performs original music with his wife, most frequently as a duo. Together, they have recorded seven CDs and their songs have won awards from the Positive Music Association and acclaim at the Indie International Songwriting Competition. JD described the unifying focus of his songs: “I’m attracted to writing about themes of the heart . . . not only about love, but also of following dreams . . . going through the dark times and coming out more real on the other side.”

Monica Pasqual. Monica is a 52-year-old Caucasian woman who lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. She has been writing songs for 24 years, and estimated her lifetime songwriting total at 150, with about 10 songs written in the least 2 years. She writes lyrics in Spanish as well as English. Monica is a classically trained pianist. She also sings, and plays accordion and percussion. She has been performing for 30 years and estimated her annual performances with her band, Blame Sally, at about 100 last year, before deciding to take a break from touring this year. Audiences ranged from 20 to 13,000. She described her songwriting genre as “Americana folk.”

Monica “fell in love with the piano” listening to her father play classical music as she lay underneath their piano at home. She recalled writing simple songs at 2 or 3 years old, briefly took singing lessons not long thereafter, and studied classical piano from age 5 to 14. She noted,

“I liked to improvise musically and I loved writing poetry also, but I didn’t put them together till a lot later.” As a teenager, she “got really serious about piano performance. I did some state competitions and thought that was my dream.” She started college as a performance major, but was forced to abandon her studies when health concerns rendered this infeasible. She took a complete break, ultimately returning to college to major in political science, while earning money as a classical and modern dance accompanist. In her late 20s, Monica and a friend formed a company to compose film and commercial soundtracks, for which she won some Emmy awards. She also wrote her first “real” song at about this time. She took some songwriting classes, began sharing her songs at open microphone sessions, and realized, “as soon as I’d written one or two songs, I’m like, ‘I’m a songwriter!’” Feeling extremely confident that this was her calling, she “just dove in,” assembled a band, took more voice lessons, and began recording and performing. The band Blame Sally grew out of these early collaborations, and has been together 13 years, playing many of Monica’s songs, and winning numerous Independent Music Awards (IMAs) for its recordings. Monica’s solo albums have also won IMA Best Concept Album and Best Eclectic Album. She described her herself as “a touring, recording songwriter,” and is also teaching songwriting. Monica loves songwriting and said she felt blessed to be doing what she loves: “I would be bored doing almost anything else I think. . . . When I started writing songs, I felt like I’d found myself.”

Thea Summer Deer. Thea is a 58-year-old Caucasian woman who lives in North Carolina. She has been writing songs for 40 years. She sings, and plays guitar and percussion. She has written about four songs in the last 2 years and roughly 100 over her lifetime. Thea has been performing for 23 years, playing about 24 times annually in recent years for audiences of

30 to 50 people, and sometimes as many as a few hundred. She defined her musical genre as singer-songwriter.

Thea's awakening to music came through the Girl Scouts: She was "smitten" listening to the girls playing guitar and singing around the campfire. Her mother bought her a guitar when she was 8 and took her to guitar lessons. In fifth grade, she started a band with a girlfriend with whom she remembers "just making up songs and having fun with it." At 15, she got her first steel-stringed guitar, and began taking lessons at a music store where she was exposed to a broader range of musical genres than the folk she had been listening to, and where she began to learn more sophisticated guitar skills. It was at about this time that Thea recalls writing her first "real song," one of her poems that she set to music. Thea became a midwife and herbalist, and is also a licensed minister, educator, and author. She earned a doctorate in shamanic psychospiritual studies. She "always played music through everything else," and performed in her teens for friends at parties, in her 20s at spiritual gatherings and at political events and rallies. Initially very shy on stage, Thea took a performance class when she was 31, and began performing professionally when she was 35 and was forced to support herself after a divorce. Today, she plays with her husband in the acoustic duo Thea and the GreenMan. She has recorded five solo CDs, starting when she was about 30. Thea described her journey of songwriting as having been one of personal healing, and her current musical activities reflect her view that her songs may offer healing to others:

I feel like my music is a ministry and, you know, I've been ministering to myself through that expression but it has also become a ministry that I bring out. I tend to play in a lot of churches and healing retreats. It feels like a musical ministry to me. . . . My music is healing, healing me, and I've heard from other people that it touches them in ways that are healing too.

Ariel Thiermann. Ariel is a 36-year-old Caucasian woman living on the Central California coast. She has been writing songs for 24 years and estimated that she has written

about 200 to 300 over her lifetime, with about 18 songs written in the past couple of years. She sings and plays piano and guitar. She has performed for 31 years, and currently gives about 15 performances annually to audiences ranging from 30 to 200 people. She defined her current musical genre as folk pop.

Ariel traced her development as a songwriter and musician to the time she was in her mother's womb. Her mother, a singer-songwriter of music for children, wrote her first album, called "Nine Months", "against the belly that I was growing inside." Ariel's very first cry after birth and her mother's response were recorded and included on the end of the album. "And so I was a recording artist from the moment I came into the world!" Ariel started getting interested in her mother's songwriting process at about 5 years old, and began participating in studio recordings with her mother at seven. She also began writing poetry at an early age: Her first book of poems was entitled *Reflections of a Seven Year Old*. She said that she began writing songs at 10 and "never stopped." As a musician, Ariel was strongly drawn to the piano, which she began playing at 5. She was encouraged to explore music but never felt pushed by her parents. She recalled that at 9, she "really, really connected with" her piano teacher, and "I think one of the first songs I wrote was for him." She also developed her vocal capabilities, and said that, "my number one main instrument throughout my entire life has been the instrument of my voice." She sang at 14 with an a cappella trio of female voices, and cowrote songs with the other members. As she continued to write songs on the piano in her mid to late teens, she moved away from the formality of reading music and memorizing complex pieces to simplifying and breaking music down into chord structures. Ariel had been performing with her mother since she was very young, singing harmonies. She shared her own songs publicly for the first time at 20, and began recording CDs. Later in her 20s, she experimented with cowriting songs. Ariel said that,

“a lot of my time now is spent in the working realm, songwriting with kids, which is an incredibly joyful experience. And I love supporting them to find their voice.” She works as a vocal coach and expressive arts counselor, and also runs a women’s singing circle involving improvisational songwriting. She described her current songwriting activities as follows:

I’m a singer-songwriter in this style of like a fusion of folk, pop, and jazz—so different influences that I love. I’m a vocalist, a vocal performance artist really. I do a lot of experimentation with a cappella and harmony. . . . I’m a reflective songwriter who’s trying to make sense out of this mysterious journey of life.

Hal Wagenet. Hal is a 66-year-old Caucasian man who lives in northern California. He has been writing songs for 51 years, and has written about four in the last 2 years and 60 over his lifetime. He sings, and plays piano, guitar, organ, synthesizer, clarinet, band percussion, trumpet, trombone, and guitar synthesizer. He estimated that he performs about 20 times a year to audiences averaging a few hundred people and has been performing for 51 years. His primary musical genre is rock, but he said that his songs are “not easily classifiable” and are influenced by both Western and Eastern classical music.

Musical expression came easily to members of Hal’s family. His mother was a conservatory pianist and his father “loved music with a beat.” Hal began piano lessons at 4 or 5, and was drawn to “flashy, more virtuoso-type pieces.” By 14, he was giving “black tie” classical recitals. At 16, at the time of the British rock invasion in the 1960s, he heard another boy play an electric guitar and was completely captivated. He put an electrical pickup on an old acoustic guitar of his father’s and set about teaching himself to play. Within a few months, he had formed a band that was paid to play for his high school’s Christmas dance. He wrote his first song shortly after starting to play guitar but tended to focus more on arrangement in the early phases of his career. He abandoned college and moved to San Francisco to pursue his dream of becoming a professional musician. In his late teens, Hal first played bass and then lead guitar for

the Indian Head Band, and then convinced the lead vocalist of the psychedelic group It's A Beautiful Day (IABD) to let him sit in with that band for a week. This led to him joining IABD as lead guitarist in 1968. The group signed with CBS and the band's first album went gold, with the hit song "White Bird." Hal said that IABD was not willing to add his original songs to its repertoire, but that he continued to write. As his commitments with IABD began to wind down, he began working on his own compositions with another band he created, Natural Act. However, his ability to play his songs was seriously challenged when, at age 27, his right hand was "virtually amputated" in a sawmill accident. He underwent "3 years of complicated neurosurgeries, tendon surgeries, blood surgeries, bone reconstruction, skin grafts, and a very long and painful rehabilitation process." Although unable to hold a pick, feel the strings, or move his fingers readily, Hal found a way to continue to play guitar using an ingenious plectrum device he designed to affix to his right index finger. He continued to realize his original music creations, frequently employing a guitar synthesizer, as a soloist or working with studio musicians. In the last year, he joined the band Redbud, and said:

I'm playing in a small rural town in Northern California with a band that has big ideas and an experimental attitude and a positive social message, using a variety of styles. I play everything from tangos and waltzes and flamencos to hard core heavy metal and punk and rhythm and blues. It's all in that band. And so that variety is something that has always been in my soul and I've finally found an avenue to express it.

The Dance With Professionalism

This theme emerged from the Thematic Content Analysis procedure (chapter 3) and is presented here rather than in chapter 5 because of its strong connection to the biographical experience of participants as musicians and songwriters, which forms much of the substance of this chapter. In their interviews, 11 of the 12 participants (92%) discussed the ways in which they had explored using their musical skills to support themselves financially: Each person's path was unique and dynamic, with goals, feelings, and experiences related to professional

expressions of his or her musicianship changing over time. Nine participants (75%) had derived their income primarily from musical pursuits for some period of their lives, typically for decades, but not necessarily exclusively from their songwriting. The theme *The Dance With Professionalism* captures the ongoing engagement over the lifetime reported by participants in determining how and when to express their musical and songwriting abilities with intent to earn income, the complex and diverse professional manifestations they described, and the ways in which they experienced change in themselves or their lives as a result of this relationship to professionalism.

Although I did not assess their motivation for studying music, it is interesting to note that 5 participants (42%) explored formal, undergraduate education in music. Three participants (25%) majored or minored in college in musical subjects. Two participants (17%) began music major programs and changed majors. One participant (8%), JD, somewhat humorously considered his immersion in the Nashville songwriting community equivalent to graduate school in songwriting, following an undergraduate degree in music education.

Participants spoke extensively about their changing relationship to their goals for commercial success, as defined by the Western popular music industry, with its emphasis on stardom and “making it”—becoming a celebrity musical performer with a sizable national or international following, and selling significant numbers of records. One participant, Hal, had “made it,” touring internationally as a member of the band *It’s A Beautiful Day* (IABD), whose first album went gold, along with the single “White Bird.” His determination to become a professional musician was evident in high school, when he taught himself guitar, constituted a band, and got paid to play for the high school prom, promoting his band and making money from gigs at 16. Although he said he was not successful in convincing IABD’s leader to include his

songs in the band's repertoire, Hal later wrote, recorded, and performed his original songs with bands and as a solo artist after leaving IABD, while also engaging in a range of nonmusical professional pursuits.

Making peace with not "making it" or not reaping huge financial rewards from their music was a concern voiced by several. Thea said:

I felt very driven earlier in my songwriting process or career. . . . I've always felt like I've never really been successful with music in the way the music business defines success, yet I know in my heart that I have been very successful, because of what it's brought to me in my life. Success measured by how many records—I don't even know that's appropriate. As I get older and don't care about the program, I realize I have been so successful. I've recorded five records and I've gotten to perform with amazing people and open for amazing people and have stories to tell. . . . There isn't the driven, desperate neediness that I had earlier when I felt that I had to give it my all, and um push, push, push. And schmooze, schmooze, schmooze, and who do you know? And try to be in the right place at the right time to get the lucky break, which is such an illusion. But I've had many lucky breaks at the same time. . . . It's taken me on redefining success and redefining self-worth.

Ariel described the arc of her relationship with commercial aspirations of success:

I started out not having any attachment. Then . . . there was a middle point where I got really wrapped up in trying to prove myself, and then figured maybe I wasn't any good, went through all this insecurity, and just felt like not doing it all. And then let go of the attachment to what I thought I should be. And now I feel like it's the beginning of a new phase of having true freedom as artist.

After the success of Rita's hit, "Mill Valley," she found herself at a professional crossroads:

Once the song came out, I had to decide whether to stay in [elementary school] teaching, or to leave and pursue a music career, which I knew was my big chance to do. So that's what I did. I left teaching. And all these years, I've just been making my living, or trying to make my living at times, doing mainly music.

Jan described a missed commercial opportunity in her youth:

The guy who owned the club actually had a connection in Paris, and they set me up there to talk to the bigwigs to get a recording contract with Philips Recording. And they wanted me to sign a 2-year contract. And I was so dumb, I didn't have a lawyer . . . and I was homesick, I just wanted to go back to America. So I just basically said "no," and came back here.

Monica talked about dealing with disappointment:

I put out another solo album, under my own name, had a band with that. And when that just didn't really take off—a lot of people thought that something would happen with it but it didn't—I just became disillusioned. And at the same time my father died, my dog died, all these things, so I was just like, “I need to give it a rest.”

Reflecting on her decision to pursue a musical career, despite not realizing huge financial gains, Monica said: “I feel incredibly blessed, honestly. I wish I made more money (laughs) . . . But that being said, I probably could have done a lot of different things, and this is what I've chosen to do. And I really, really feel fortunate.” Don had a similar feeling of satisfaction from pursuing his music, despite the financial challenges:

It's changed my life a little bit to where I'm able to play music for a living, which I never thought would happen. But it's happening, and I'm happy it's happening because I don't want to do anything else. I've often thought about going back, and getting a regular job. When I think about it I'm, “No, I think I'll just stick this out a little longer.” So my songwriting has affected my life in the fact that it's been able to help me financially support my family.

Dede said, “You've got to be lying to say you don't want to make it.” However, she initially chose to pursue a career in business after assessing her chance of financial success in the music industry:

I knew it wouldn't make money or take me anywhere so I did it on the side. If it happened it happened. I knew the odds were against me. And what I define as success—making money, you know, to live off it.

She reported that her goals have changed: “Now that I've pursued my corporate career and done everything I want to do, I've realized ‘That's not really what I want to do.’ So now I've come back to music full steam.” Noting that, “the definition of making it today is totally different from the definition of what it was 10 years ago,” Dede is exploring a more strategic approach to professionalizing her musical activities:

As opposed to just playing clubs and writing songs and hoping you get a record deal—the old traditional method—the methods that I'm looking at now are more writing music for other people. Film scores, which I've been asked to do. Recently, I've been asked to do something for a video game. Stuff like that.

Four participants (33%) mentioned this professional strategy of applying their songwriting skills in the service of other people's projects, whether preceding, in parallel with, or following efforts to advance their own careers as artists performing their original music. Nick said he had "scored music for films, indie films and stuff like that, and TV shows." Early in her career, following her hit "Mill Valley," Rita "wrote for a lot of children's series, and programs and cassettes and albums and CDs, and some film scores for children's films." Monica shared, "A friend and I developed a company . . . which did soundtrack work and commercial work."

Another professional strategy mentioned was to write songs with the intent of selling them to be recorded by other artists. Rita tried this and found it difficult:

I did do a lot of hustling to try to get my songs out, recorded, get them to publishers, did that a lot, and it was—oh, it's a tough road! And I never caught on. What I did never really caught on in a way that made me commercial money being sung by other artists.

JD pursued a career as a professional songwriter in Nashville and Los Angeles, and was very successful at seeing his songs turn into hits for other artists (including Reba McEntire, Terri Clark, B.J. Thomas, Peter Cetera, the Oak Ridge Boys, and Kathy Mattea): "Through many of those years—the Nashville years—I wasn't thinking of myself as an artist. I was just writing. And, hopefully, writing something that somebody else would like." After a spiritual experience, he found himself beginning to write songs for himself, and pursuing a professional musical path as a songwriter and performer with Jan, who, since the age of 20, had "always been in bands or somehow or other, making [her] living playing music and singing," herself an accomplished jazz singer and musician who had toured with John Denver, Steve Martin, and the Dirt Band. Denver also recorded one of Jan's songs.

Exploring the relationship between their musical identity and other aspects of their life was discussed by 5 participants (42%), with some seeking clear boundaries and others integration. Russ worked his whole career as an educator, while also playing professionally with

his band, Extra Large, but kept the two distinct: “I would never try to insinuate my musical career into teaching. When I’m working with parents, I don’t want them to think, ‘Oh, he’s a musician.’” Don also preferred a clear boundary: “I don’t really talk too much about what I do . . . I’ve worked with people before and they didn’t know I was a musician. They just found out from somebody else.” Dede said, “A lot of my friends don’t know that I do music. . . . In my professional career, people don’t know I do music. . . . It’s the last thing I bring up unless someone else brings it up.” She uses a stage name when performing, and said, “When I go by a pseudonym, they can’t find me. So that’s important. I’ve established that clear boundary.” Ariel expanded her professional musical activities, working as a vocal coach and expressive arts counselor, using songwriting with kids and adults, and wondered how to integrate her personal expression as a musician and songwriter into this emerging professional identity: “How am I going to incorporate now in my professional life my artist self? How do I hold on to that as a songwriter, if I’m not [performing as much]?” Nick described his efforts to integrate his songwriter self with the rest of his life and roles:

So I’ve had all these identity issues, between, like, “Am I a songwriter, a family man, a dad, a husband, a professional, blah blah blah?” And I think in my 30s here, I’m trying to integrate the two, and be, like, “I’m both those things. That’s the gestalt me.”

Besides writing, recording, and performing their original songs with intent to earn income, participants reported being paid to use their musical skills in a variety of ways at different points in their lives, often concurrently with pursuing their own music. The list of musically oriented professions they reported included teaching elementary school music; teaching songwriting and singing; working as a production engineer; working as a multi-instrumentalist recording music for video games; working as an expressive arts counselor; accompanying dance classes as a pianist; and writing songs and scores for film, TV, and video games.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented summary demographics about my participants and their backgrounds in music and songwriting, as well as detailed profiles of each participant's individual path to becoming a songwriter, and their experiences of negotiating their relationship to professionalizing their musical activities. As was revealed in the aggregate data, these songwriters exhibited precocious interest and ability in music as very young children. This has translated into impressive productivity as songwriters and great depth of experience as performers as they have pursued their music and refined their craft through adolescence and adulthood. As their individual stories attest, the desire to use their talents as lyricists and musicians to create and share their songs has been a defining passion and a powerful force animating their lives from a young age, although the journey has offered many challenges, opportunities, decision points, tradeoffs, and rewards as each one sought to express him- or herself as a songwriter. The next chapter presents the results of my study, examining how participants may have been affected or transformed as a result of these richly lived songwriting lives.

Chapter 5: Results

In chapter 3, I described the procedures I used to conduct thematic analysis of the data. This resulted in six primary themes that capture the most significant commonalities that emerged from the interviews with regard to the research question of how participants had experienced change in themselves or their lives as a result of songwriting. The themes are listed in Table 8 and discussed sequentially in the sections that follow. Top-level frequency counts for the prevalence of a particular theme are included for each primary theme and subtheme.

Table 8

Summary of Themes

Primary theme	Subthemes
Connecting	Connecting While Writing Solo Connecting With Cowriters Connecting With People In One's Life Connecting With Other Artists Connecting With Listeners Connecting With Emotions Songwriting And Spirituality Are Connected
Communicating	Sharing Self Sending A Message Expressing Feelings Song Themes: Song Thematic Content Song Thematic Qualities Participants' Selected Songs Song Theme Evolution
Wellbeing	
Affirmation	
Personal Growth	Healing Processing Experience Empowerment
Making A Difference	

I have included many quotes from the coded transcripts to illustrate each theme, so as to paint the richest picture possible of the direct experience of participants using their own words. I have opted to exclude filler words, such as “um” and “you know,” from the quoted material, except where I judged these to be significant in terms of showing the difficulty of formulating a thought, or the way in which an idea took time to form in a participant’s awareness. First names are used for participants when quoted. Lyrics for the songs participants selected for discussion in the interview are included in Appendix B.

Before exploring the themes in detail, it is useful to consider the view of participants at a macro level about whether songwriting had changed them. In my interview protocol (Appendix A), I asked participants directly whether they had experienced change as a result of their practice. Eleven participants (92%) responded affirmatively. Hal said, “A [songwriting] expression that I would have now would have the benefit of all those previous experiences. So I myself have been changed by the process.” Ariel said, “It’s been a really positive, transformational process for me.” Jan said songwriting had changed her life “in a good way.” Don commented, “It’s changed my life a little bit to where I’m able to play music for a living, which I never thought would happen.” For JD, “I started to have hit songs, which changed my life.” Rita said that songwriting had “definitely” changed her life in important ways. Thea laughed when asked this question, and said “everything” had changed: “Where I’ve gone, what I’ve done, who [*sic*] I’ve married.” She said that, as a result of her songwriting, she had been “following that trail of inspiration, following my heart above all else.” These comments suggest that participants broadly viewed their songwriting practice as having changed them. The interviews afforded an opportunity for a nuanced discussion of participants’ songwriting practice and its impact, delving into their experience in depth and expanding on these initial, high-level

responses. The six themes to be discussed in this section paint a rich picture of the ways in which the songwriters in my study were changed or transformed as a result of creating, recording, and performing their songs.

The first two themes—Connecting and Communicating—are concerned with aspects of the practice of songwriting, roughly equivalent to process and content, respectively. Connecting and Communicating engender change or transformation in their own right for the songwriter, while simultaneously acting as mechanisms to enable the realization of other change or transformative outcomes in the lives of participants, reflected in the other four themes. In other words, these two themes are both ends and means to change and transformation: As a result of Connecting and Communicating, songwriters experience Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference. For this reason, Connecting and Communicating are presented first. Making A Difference—arguably the most forcefully articulated impact of songwriting to emerge from the thematic analysis of the data—is particularly powerful, in that it transforms not only the songwriter but his or her listeners as well.

Connecting

It is through the enactment of the songwriting practice, whether in composition or sharing of songs, that Connecting takes place. All participants (100%) alluded to one or more ways in which songwriting allows for establishing connection, whether with self, other, or spirit—and these forms of connection need not be mutually exclusive. Entering into the creative process invites and implies connection, whether songwriting alone or with a cowriter, listening to one's songs by oneself or sharing them with listeners through performance or recordings.

Intersubjectivity was defined in chapter 1 in accordance with Stolorow (1997), as an “individual's world of inner experience and the embeddedness of this world with other such

worlds in a continual flow of reciprocal mutual influence” (p. 338). Chapter 2 elaborated the ways in which the creative process may be conceptualized as cocreation through relational participation in the intersubjective field—the domain of mutual engagement for individual subjectivities and something beyond these subjectivities, variously referred to as the life force, the mystery, the muse, God, or spirit. Many of the experiences described by participants in the Connecting theme are expressions of intersubjective cocreativity, and include transpersonal experiences, as defined in chapter 1. The fruits of connection encompass relatively persistent and tangible benefits—songs, community, friendships—as well as intangible, in-the-moment, social or self-transcendent experiences, which vary greatly in nature and in their significance and impact on the songwriter. For example, Connecting with oneself and one’s music can lead to relatively mundane shifts in subjective experience, as when a songwriter experiences a change in emotional state while writing or playing a song. Connecting can also lead to profound peak (Maslow, 1964), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990), or transpersonal experiences, while alone, cowriting, or performing.

I have opted to organize the subthemes of Connecting by the type of connection being engaged. These are: Connecting While Writing Solo, Connecting With Cowriters, Connecting With People In One’s Life, Connecting With Other Artists, Connecting With Listeners, and Connecting With Emotions. The final subtheme of Connecting is entitled Songwriting And Spirituality Are Connected, which explores whether participants saw an explicit connection between songwriting and spirituality. Each subtheme is detailed below, and reveals a richness of experiences of change and transformation in relationship to the Connecting engendered by the practice of creating and sharing original songs.

Connecting while writing solo. Ariel described songwriting as a way to connect with oneself, “a way to continue to be connected to the essence of who we are.” When writing alone, songwriters experienced a variety of forms of connection, entering into cocreative and transpersonal states. For example, Ariel described one way in which she writes, beginning with improvisation, in which connecting with the music inspires songs:

If I let myself just improvise then surprising things can occur. . . . And often I’ll just go to the piano and just look around sonically for a chord progression that moves me that I feel connected to, and if there’s a subject going on, if there’s something going on in my life . . . or maybe there’s something in the world that’s happening that I feel I have to process, I’ll just start singing, and I’ll have a piece of paper on the piano and just jot words down or ideas.

Monica reported that frequently she finds the missing element in her creative exploration for a song emerging through her interaction (connection) with her environment:

The meaning was already happening, but then the core of it was missing. . . . And that happens to me a lot where it’ll be, just, something’s happening, and then my eye finds that thing that [*sic*] the meaning was already there and that just clinches it.

Nick, Monica, and JD described their experience while composing alone using language directly referencing the transpersonal experience of transcending ego and losing a sense of time described in connection with peak experiences (Maslow, 1964) and flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). Nick and Monica used very similar terms to capture their experience:

When I meditate and I get that amazing feeling of grounded connectedness with the entire world—you know, we have those peak experiences where all of a sudden for brief moments you feel like you’ve started to put your fingers into the slightly higher plane of existence. . . . I think that music and dance—these are expressions of joy that we share with all of humanity—are for me a way to tap into some current that is a slightly higher plane and some current that is—it’s universal to all of us. Here’s how . . . music can be a spiritual experience for me. (Nick)

It’s very hard for me to meditate . . . but the closest thing to that I feel is being at the piano where there is that sense of timelessness—did you ever read Maslow? The ecstasy. It does feel like that. That happens to me performing, in studio, and writing. There’s just this time doesn’t matter anymore, you’re not very conscious of it, or yourself in place . . .—and that does feel spiritual in some ways. (Monica)

JD also talked about transcending his ego in the process of entering into his creative process:

I enter a space where often time flies and I have no idea how long I've been there. (pause) It's just kind of like I lose the ego part of myself or the part that's really monitoring what's going on and just enter this space of what I call creativity. And again that's in relationship to . . . the spiritual aspect of it, where . . . I am connected to something that's (pause) not defined by my body or my experience particularly. . . . It's definitely a feeling of connecting to something greater than just talking about the weather.

Transpersonal experiences may be thought of as altered states of consciousness, as might occur from the use of certain drugs. This appears to be the parallel Ariel drew about her experience of composing:

I feel like the songwriting process is a drug for me. . . . It feels like an altered—it feels like it does the exact same thing. It opens me up in a way that I feel people use drugs and alcohol to open their hearts and their minds and their beings to a spiritual connection.

Another common experience of connection reported by songwriters composing alone is that of feeling as though something greater than themselves is offering or opening them to a completed song to be captured without effort. Ten participants (83%) said that they had experiences of songs coming to them essentially fully formed, although these were fairly infrequent happenings. As Ariel said, “There’s the occasional rare song that just comes out and is done. I’ve had a couple of experiences of that, and that’s always really magical.”

Jan described how transpersonal experience of moving beyond ego and connecting with the divine is an outcome of a certain level of preparedness or development on the part of the songwriter:

You get your ego out of the way, and you become an instrument through which this—I would just call it this divine energy—comes through. The great soul, the great mind, can come through when you show up having done all your work, you’re tuned up, you’re ready to go.

She told the story of a song that came to her fully formed when she was in such a state of preparedness, a state of deep spiritual connection with the natural environment:

I got that song when we were on a vision quest, so I was up at the top of a mountain. . . . And . . . you don't have food and you're camping out for 3 days. So on the third day, I was very tuned in to the universal mother, Mother Earth, feminine face of the divine, and I got this song, like, "Pow!" It was more, like, "Shut up and sit down and write this down because this is what I want to say."

As was true for Jan above, the communication of a song fully formed seems to demand the songwriter's complete and immediate attention. This happened for Russ when he was traveling with his wife:

It's called "Dance 214." . . . 'Cause at 2:14 in the morning in a hotel, I woke up and the song was just there. The whole thing. And I couldn't go back to sleep, so I went into the bathroom . . . and I wrote it out on the bottom of a Kleenex box.

Dede also reported this experience:

I've had [songs come fully formed] before. . . . Those are the epiphany moments. . . . When those happen, my life just stops. I pop out the recorder . . . I start writing something down. Don't bother me, don't answer the phone, and I just get in my zone and I don't come out.

Thea described receiving a song fully formed when she was not alone, but in a ceremony at a sacred site. The facilitator of the ceremony had asked her beforehand whether she would offer a song. Because Thea thought she might be called upon to sing and had nothing prepared, she said that she made herself available to see what might come. A song came to her, but the facilitator never called upon her and she did not sing it in the ceremony. It is unclear whether the presence of other people was a factor in this experience or not. Thea's description suggested that she felt herself to be connecting with a higher presence but not necessarily with those in the ceremony. I include her quote here in order to group it with other experiences of songs coming fully formed:

I was completely, totally blank. No title to a song, no feeling, nothing! Just opened myself completely empty, and in that emptiness this song downloaded. It was like this download—boom! I'm hearing the words, I'm hearing the melody. . . . I got home, went to my studio, and recorded it. . . . So that was a real spiritual experience for me. . . . It felt like a transmission from another dimension. . . . I was feeling the beauty of the golden glow of the day but it just opened me in a way that felt different. . . . It wasn't just coming from me or through me. It was a cocreation with a higher presence.

Connecting with cowriters. Eleven participants (92%) had had cowriting experience at some point in their songwriting career, and discussed this in the interview. While experiences of sitting down together in the same room with a cowriter were more commonly discussed, participants also described using technology for virtual songwriting, including e-mail, Web-based videoconferencing, and sharing audio files electronically to communicate with a cowriter not physically present. The following quotes offer rich detail about how participants experienced cocreativity in cowriting relationships, with some even using the term cocreation (unprompted by me).

Some particularly intimate forms of connection were experienced through cowriting relationships. JD commented:

Especially when I was writing for publishers, and they'd set up appointments—and it's kind of like (pause) promiscuity, like dating. It's like you're thrown together with somebody you don't know and at the end of 2 or 3 hours they may feel like your new best friend—or they may not. But there's that opportunity to come together in a way that's really intimate, and it changes things in terms of how you feel about the person, or can.

For JD, this led to enduring friendships: “I’ve developed many, many close friendships over the years because of writing songs.” He and his life and musical partner Jan fell in love while living in different locations and writing a song together, sending ideas back and forth: “That’s our love song. That was how we were falling in love.”

Thea noted that cowriting experiences could vary greatly, with some being “amazingly difficult” or unpleasant. Evoking the metaphor of making love, she spoke of rare and “magical” experiences of cocreativity when cowriting:

The process of collaborative songwriting is also really powerful. . . . It happens rarely because it's a magical—it's a resonant frequency that you get on with somebody. It's like making love. You're just in that “my thoughts are your thoughts, and your prayers are my prayers, and we're just moving into this resonant frequency together where we are birthing a creation, literally, conceiving.” It's a conception of a creation. . . . I'm really about cocreation. I feel like we're moving out of competition and into cocreation. So

what does cocreation look like? How do we practice that? I got goosebumps just even talking about it. It's a process you create with somebody.

I wondered about the frequency with which JD experienced the spiritual state he described when songwriting alone (discussed in *Connecting While Writing Solo*) in cowriting situations. He said, "I think that it happens more rarely for me when I'm in a room with another person. It does happen."

Jan's choice of language to describe cowriting captured the profundity of connection and the joy she experienced in cocreation:

It's one of the most lovely, soul-connecting—to really find somebody you're connecting with on a soul level, and they also happen to be really a fine artist, and they really have done all of their homework, and so you're at this very high level musically and lyrically and, I would say, emotionally. It hardly gets any better than that, it's really great. . . . Well, It's kind of joy. Jumping up and down, going "Yeah!" This is what life is supposed to be. You're cocreating, you're improvising, you're creating something that wasn't there before, and you're doing it with someone else. And so that's collaboration.

Ariel's description of cowriting was at once simple and evocative of the flow of cocreation:

"Before computers and all that really came into play, we would just sit on a rug with him with his guitar and me with a tape recorder, and just record. And then songs would come through."

Connecting with people in one's life. Ten participants (83%) reported instances of their songwriting process or the content of their songs being influenced by people personally known to them in either the present or earlier in their lives, as well as strangers they encountered. The way in which these other people find their way into the actual crafting of a song seems more often than not to occur when the person is not physically present but comes to mind during the process of writing. Nick held a very holistic view of others' participation:

The relationships in my life are so much what inspire either a song about other people or a song where I'm looking inwards. So in some ways all the people that I love in my life are involved in my songwriting process.

Don also experienced his songwriting process as broadly influenced by the plethora of people in his daily life:

Don: Oh yeah! Yeah! All kinds of people influence my writing process. It can be a family member. It can be a friend. It can be somebody in the band. Yeah, a lot of people—there's a lot of people that influence my writing process.

Interviewer: And how do they do that?

Don: By interacting with them in everyday life, you know? Hanging out, being friends. Everyday friends passing away, babies being born, everyday life stuff, you know? And all that influences me. Like I said, it's everyday life, friends, people, family, some people you don't know, some nice people, some mean people, it's everything.

He gave an example:

There's a song on my CD I wrote called "Reflections," and that's a song about my grandfather, just thinking about him when I grew up, and all the times and the influences he had on me. . . . I wrote that after he passed away. And every time I play that song, it's like he's there.

Hal also referred to the ways in which others not present had influenced the development of "Galileo" (Appendix B), the song he shared in the interview. He began writing a song about his struggles to get the band he had joined (It's A Beautiful Day) to play his original songs. He had a rough idea for the lyrics of a man looking at the stars, thinking he saw something there, and then going to speak to the people. He told me that he had a vague recollection of someone saying to him at that point, "This is very similar to Galileo's story," and that this altered the course of the song. I asked him for more details:

That [input] would have been something atmospheric I suppose—a friend, a visitor, my girlfriend, somebody might have said something like that. And I have no idea (laughs) at this point where that actually came from. But after having started it, it somehow came in. I didn't set out to write something called "Galileo."

Gregory initially took a more narrow perspective about how others influenced his process, saying: "Only if I'm writing about someone. If I'm writing about someone, then they will have a big impact on the song and how it turns out." However, he also mentioned how the

lives of other people influence his songs, and that he may be “just walking around anywhere and hearing somebody talk. . . . I’ll pick up songs from life, and just hear something, and go, ‘that’s an idea!’” Russ recalled how a friend influenced the writing of the line—“It’s our only piece of clay. Put it on the wheel and throw a better day”—in his song “Tomorrow” (Appendix B). He said that one of his friends is a ceramics teacher and when he was working on the lyrics and thinking about how a person shapes something, “I thought of him.”

Connecting with other artists. This subtheme of Connecting speaks to the ways in which the participants in my study acknowledged the strong influences of many artists and musicians whose music they listened to, studied, learned from, or from which they derived inspiration. These musicians were not physically present at the time of creation of the song, but their inspiration informed the artistic expression of the songwriter. All participants (100%) reported this experience. A list of specific genres or artists mentioned as influences during the interviews is compiled in Appendix H, and displays significant breadth of engagement with other musics and styles.

Participants were very specific in their descriptions about their awareness of other musical influences. Hal wrote a song about his creative process, and captured this idea in one of the lines of the song—“As I think of writing and singing songs for you, the faces of a thousand writers float before my view”—which he went on to explain to me: “You’re thinking about how other people write things and can I be like them?” Jan also credited other musicians with inspiring her writing:

When I listen to [other musicians’ music], it informs not only the structure and the musical part of [the song], but the lyrical part of it too. I get to say what I want to say, but I’m using all these other forms. I’m borrowing from the experts, from the masters. So that really helps me. Because I don’t think you write out of a vacuum, you know? You’re standing on the shoulders of these brilliant souls that have come before.

On a very personal note, Ariel's earliest musical influence was her mother, a children's songwriter:

The first album that she ever wrote was called "Nine Months" and she wrote it against the belly that I was growing inside, her belly. So that was the introduction, and when the fetus is growing the main sense that's happening is the sense of hearing. Feeling and hearing are the main senses. So I heard a lot of music and it happened to be about her pregnancy.

As was discussed in Ariel's profile in chapter 4, she believed that the intense connection with her mother through prenatally hearing songs in which she (Ariel) was the subject was deeply formative. Although she credited many musical influences, she said, "It definitely started with my mom. I was in a musical environment from the beginning of my life."

Actively listening to or working with and absorbing the lessons and skill of other musicians came up frequently in participant interviews, as the following quotes reveal:

"I was just learning everybody else's stuff, which I think was really important to do as a songwriter." (Jan)

". . . so many different phases of exploration and learning and the musicians that I hung out with and learned from . . . and the different styles that I learned how to play." (Thea)

"I like to listen to everything and try to take what's right about it that makes it what it is. So I just try to find the good and listen to everything." (Russ)

Sometimes I'm at . . . someone else's performance, and they're a very inspiring artist and . . . I'll go, "they gave me an idea!" . . . I never plagiarize, but I always get ideas from other people and the songs and where they're going with the music. (Gregory)

". . . People who influenced you growing up and you take their ideas and use them, because that's what they did, and that's what that person did before them." (Don)

Ariel seemed to suggest another view, less about conscious attention to other artists' work and more about an unconscious absorption of the music in one's environment:

I think we are like human sponges. It's a magical thing that we can actually listen to something and then it will come back out through a song or through our voice in a melody. So that is continuous and I think that's a real gift. (Ariel)

Jan described a particularly unusual experience of cocreation with other musicians, in the writing of "I Dreamed Of Rain" (Appendix B). She conceptualized this as both engaging with specific composers (Foster, Copland) and as a personal spiritual process:

If you were putting on a play you would have different characters and you would say: "Now the angels show up and they say this, and here comes Stephen Foster to describe what that is." But when you say other [influences on my songwriting], it's not really other. . . . All of that is already moving in me. . . . It's almost like having a little inner dialog, you see, different parts of myself, or different parts of what you'd maybe call higher power. Now it did feel like Aaron Copland. . . . It was, like, here comes Aaron Copland sitting on my shoulder, saying, "Don't get too fancy with these chord changes and use these intervals because that goes to the heart of it." . . . So, it's like, OK, I'll borrow that from Aaron Copland. It's like having a cast of characters, some of whom are other. Stephen Foster lived 150 years ago but those songs that he wrote hit my heart when I was a kid and they still do. . . . In a way it's like calling on that spirit.

One participant (8%), Rita, stood out for deliberately limiting the extent to which she listens to others' music:

I don't listen enough intentionally to other people's music. . . . One of the reasons that I have a hard time listening throughout my day is because I'm always busy. And music is never background for me, it's always foreground. So if it's playing, I'm listening to it and focusing on it. And more so, it always evokes some kind of strong emotional reaction, so it takes my attention.

Connecting with listeners. Participants expressed a motivation to connect with listeners through recordings as one reason they create their music; performing their songs also yields significant experiences of connection. Nick had placed a song "into this iPhone game that became the biggest music iPhone game ever. And that song, it was the first song you play in the game, so it reached immediately, like, 8 million people." He described how this affected him: "That feeling of connecting with 8 million people and sharing my art with 8 million people, even if I didn't get their direct feedback, was extremely powerful to me, and satisfying." Monica said of her recordings: "It's how I want to connect to people." However, Ariel was frank about not

sacrificing her artistic integrity in the service of connection: “I’m more of an artist and I don’t really care if the songs I write connect to everyone. But they will connect to some people.” Jan noted that she is aware of how her listeners will connect with her songs: “We’re playing for a certain kind of audience and we need to come up with some songs that will speak with them.” Although Russ expressed an explicit desire for his audience to “connect with the song,” he realized as he was talking that his goal is about connection with the band members as well as the song:

I guess by default [I have a goal that they connect] with us too. But that goes back to performance. That’s probably the thing that people like best about us is that our performances are personal and heartfelt. And you know they really feel like we mean what we say. So that’s their connection with us.

Participants frequently had great excitement in their voices as they talked about their experiences of connection in performance, and often focused on a sense of reciprocity and the building of mutual energy between performers and audience. Many participants evoked language explicitly referencing spirituality in discussing these experiences, although this was by no means universal. Dede described her intent and experience as follows, when her band, Kittenhead, is playing a show:

I love performing! I love going out there and watching other people’s reactions! . . . I’m looking at everybody. . . . If someone’s not looking at me, I’ll stare at them until they look at me because I want to make a connection with them. . . . It’s important to engage someone from the stage and then acknowledge them. I do a pretty good job doing that.

Jan also referenced a conscious intent to engage and invite connection:

It’s like having a conversation with someone, where there’s a give and take. I have an experience of connecting with the audience in a very personal, generous sort of way, and I feel like it’s important to bring them in. Not just like I’m standing there, showing off. It’s like we’re all part of this thing that’s being created and it has to do with a back and forth.

Don talked about how exciting and motivating shared building of energy can be when his dance band, The Joint Chiefs, is playing:

The other really good part that musicians like is when people like it. And they're dancing. 'Cause we feed off of that energy and we feed off of the crowd. And that definitely gives you energy to want to play, because they're liking it and screaming and you want to give it everything you got.

Dede echoed this language:

Feeding off the energy of the crowd . . . is amazing. I try to tell people that I know, "Come to the front and engage with us, because if you stand in the back and hang in the back it's not going to be as fun for us. It's like throwing water balloons at you. Unless you throw it back at us it's not going to be a fun game."

Russ delights in the crowd singing along when his band, Extra Large, is performing: "One thing that's really cool is when you're doing your songs and people are singing back your words.

That's just, you know (pause) euphoric." Nick reported a strikingly similar experience, and explicitly characterized this as spiritual:

If I'm singing a song and I look out and see a bunch of people singing along with me and I realize that we—I feel a buzz just talking about that. . . . That collective current, and energy, and feeling tapped in, for me is a spiritual experience, and music can be that vehicle.

JD described a transpersonal quality to his experience of performing: "You kind of get this broader sense of who you are and what's possible and connection to people and, uh, to whatever the big idea is here. It's like in performing, I can often enter that (pause) that feeling."

However, despite the many positive experiences reported of connection through performance, participants readily admitted that not all live shows have these qualities. Thea acknowledged that audience response is uncertain: "I'm opening it up and just putting it out there, and it may not be received." JD said that he and Jan jokingly refer to nonresponsive audience members as "the frozen food section," and that it can be very difficult when the connection is not present:

I can get really focused on the person in the front row who's got a sour face. That can ruin my night. It happened probably just a couple of days ago . . . and there are 12 people and there's one person who's just like this (mimes), no expression, like, "I'm so bored, I

can't wait till this is over.” That's me projecting, of course. I don't know what they're feeling. That can be hard.

Five participants (42%) mentioned the experience of vulnerability when performing, apparently because they either feel exposed when revealing personal information through songs or fear negative judgment. Thea stated this directly: “Performing original songs is very vulnerable.” She continued:

[The song has] come from direct experience of something that's been directly a personal journey that I've been on, or a personal experience, or loss that I've had. So there's just this kind of baring my soul to an audience that may or may not like what I'm exposing.

Hal noted:

Song composition is a tender experience and when you first bare your concepts you're very vulnerable to criticism, and when you are performing your nerve ends are right on the front edge of the stage for anyone to step on.

In discussing his song, “Why Did You Do It, Why Don't You Care?” (Appendix B), Gregory described a process of deciding whether he was willing to include a very painful personal experience in the song about a brutal assault on his son as the final verse, knowing that this would require him to face the vulnerability that would arise when performing it: “It wasn't going to be an easy choice. It wasn't going to be an easy thing to do, especially performing it. But I had to do it. So I just put it in there.” His description of performing the song illustrates just how difficult this was:

Before he got jumped, other people had been jumped and attacked, and I saw it and felt bad for the guy. But it doesn't hit you, it doesn't hit you emotionally. You're detached from it. You say, “Yeah, it happens a lot, it's happening everywhere.” And then all of a sudden, it happens to us, our family, and it's different, it's um . . . (talks through tears). It makes you drop to your knees, it's like your insides have been ripped out. And then performing it for a while, it still gave me that feeling of being ripped out from the inside, torn apart. . . . It was very heart-wrenching to get that last verse out. I was singing with tears coming down my face.

Russ also noted an experience of vulnerability with regard to a song about his daughter, who at one point was very seriously ill but recovered:

There's another song we wrote for her, "Mi Hija," which is Spanish for *my daughter*. But in the recording, her voice is in it and she's a little baby. And that one was hard [to perform] when she was ill. But now it's great.

He spoke about the paradox involved in creating a song informed by deeply personal experience, and yet not wanting his listeners to associate his songs with him personally but, instead, create their own relationship to the material. He seemed to want to protect himself from the vulnerability he might experience through public scrutiny of the personal experiences infused in his songs:

So they don't go, "Gosh, I wonder what was going on in his life?" I don't want that. I wouldn't want that. I wouldn't want people to say, "He's writing about his this or that." . . . I want it be their song. I want my songs to be your songs.

Jan and Rita each talked about the embarrassment they felt in sharing a song before it had developed into a part of their performing repertoire. Rita played "Mill Valley" (Appendix B) for a good friend, before the song was recorded and became a hit: "I was embarrassed to sing it because it was so sentimental. I thought, 'It's too schlocky.'" Jan recalled the first time she played "I Dreamed Of Rain" (Appendix B) for her husband and writing/performing partner:

I was afraid that the song was too simple and too . . . obvious. Too corny. And so I did not sing this for anybody. . . . I played it for him. And I was so embarrassed that he wouldn't like it.

Ariel found that her feelings about the vulnerability of performing very personal material changed over time, saying that early in her career: "I did a lot of things in front of people that I might not do today. I shared a lot of very intimate material with no fear." She explained that in her early writing, she had just poured her heart into her songs without a lot of interference from her inner critic or concern for how she would be received. As time went on and she gained more feedback about the possibility of becoming a star through her music, she said that she became more self-conscious about her songwriting, which led to a stronger involvement of her inner

critic, more thought about songs having universal appeal, and a concern for how her songs might be received.

Monica made a choice to be more vulnerable than she is in other parts of her life when performing her songs. Like Russ above, she also noted the possibility of universality deriving from personal material and the willingness to offer oneself in a vulnerable way:

Monica: Normally I'm not such a revealing person. In a crowd, particularly. And that I could write something that's so revealing but has a sort of universality about it, too—It's an interesting experience to be that raw.

Interviewer: What's that like?

Monica: I'm comfortable with it, and yet I—very much when I leave the stage—I'm quite guarded. But what I perform and what I write, I feel like I'm able to be very open and very um (pause) exposed in a way that I wouldn't necessarily want to be otherwise.

Connecting with emotions. While all participants (100%) offered descriptions of emotions they experienced in the course of their practice of creating and sharing their songs, such as joy or pain, 7 participants (58%) spoke explicitly about ways in which writing or performing or listening to their songs led to a particular change in their emotional state.

Nick described this in holistic terms: “The act of songwriting and listening to my music—all of it brings me to a more heightened emotional, spiritual, psychological state.” The experience of performing or listening to a song can transport the songwriter back to the emotional state present at the time of writing or at the time of experiencing the material captured in the lyrics. For example, Monica said, “If I'm singing that song, I'm back to where I was. Generally, I feel that with most songs. I get taken to a certain place, and I feel what I felt.” Don spoke about a song he wrote about his grandfather: “Every time I play that song, it's like he's there.”

Several participants expressed or experienced being moved to tears by their songs. After listening to the playback of “Red Rock Canyon” (Appendix B) in the interview, JD said, “Well,

it was very emotional actually. It feels very emotional to listen to (laughs), and often to sing the song. . . . [It is] sometimes difficult to go through the whole song without getting that closed throat feeling.” As she recited the lyrics to one of her songs, Jan said, “I can just say that, and tears spring to my eyes.” She described the process of writing “I Dreamed Of Rain” (Appendix B): “I remember driving across the desert out of Los Angeles and getting certain phrases and stuff, and that made me cry. I’d get the words and I’d go (tearfully), ‘Oh my God.’” While listening to the song “Why Did You Do It, Why Don’t You Care?” (Appendix B) in the interview, Gregory cried: “And you can tell, I have the tears now. . . . I’m still breaking up from this because I’m remembering that night. Yeah, it’s an emotional song.” This happened in performance as well:

The first time I sang that at an open mic, I got to my son’s verse, and even though he and I aren’t talking any more, it still breaks me up. I started to cry while I was singing the song.

Songwriting and spirituality are connected. While many of the experiences described by participants in their interviews and in relation to the theme of Connecting might be considered to be spiritual, I was interested to learn whether the songwriters in my study saw any explicit connection between songwriting and spirituality. I asked this question directly in the interviews (see Appendix A). Ten participants (83%) said that they did; one (8%) said “there can be [a connection]. It’s not always the case. But certainly at times” (Rita); and one (8%) said, “I see it in a lot of people’s songs. There’s [*sic*] a lot of people who do. For me, not so much,” (Gregory), although he added that he did not rule this out in the future. Two participants (17%) defined the connection so tightly as to describe songwriting as their religion or spiritual practice:

“I feel that music is my religion. . . . That’s kind of what I feel like music is. It’s a way for me to worship the unknown.” (Ariel)

The act of writing the song is (pause) calling in the great creativity. It's like the act of writing the song to me is spiritual. . . . Songwriting—it was like it became my religion, it became my practice. (JD)

Jan explained to me how the spiritual philosophy that informs her life directly influences her expression as a songwriter:

Jan: The word spirituality is so overused, because what I'm talking about is living your life in an integrated and connected way, where you're fully human, fully excited, having a great time being here, knowing that this particular instrument doesn't last forever, and there's something much bigger that we're all coming from. So if I can be a place where that can come through . . . with this instrument, then that's what I'm going to do. . . . I like to cook dinner in the same way. It's just, like, shut up and be present and be real and be grateful and do something lovely!

Interviewer: And that lovely something could be songwriting or expressing yourself through songwriting?

Jan: Absolutely, that's the point. Since I'm a musician, since I'm a songwriter, since I'm a performer and a singer, that's what I do.

She went so far as to say that if her songwriting expression is not coming from her being grounded in her practice, as she described it above, "I can tell the difference. And it's like if it's not ringing true, then I'll throw it out and wait till the real thing comes through."

Dede also conceptualized her songwriting process as spiritual: "[Songwriting] is a spiritual expression, which then becomes performance expression, and then obviously a recorded piece of work." This was true for Monica, too: "I do feel like songwriting is a spiritual sort of thing." JD described how an evolution in his spiritual path affected his songwriting:

Going through years and years of having no particular spiritual point of view or very little experience that I would refer to that way, and then to have it come back in a fresh way that felt real—that was really important to me. So I started to begin to write more songs from that feeling.

Don noted the connection between his spirituality and songwriting:

My faith in God has a lot to do with the way I write. . . . I listen to gospel music, and if you listen to that, it's all influenced by the Bible. They read the Bible and they get scriptures from it and then they re-interpret it in music. So yes, it's a major influence.

When I asked him to explain how he saw the relationship between songwriting and spirituality, Hal said, “The inspirations that I find are from nature and my place in it, and from my community and my place in it, and from my relationships and my place in those.” Thea said, “Through my whole life, I’ve had different spiritual practices, and they’ve all affected my songwriting.” Two participants (17%) knew their songwriting to be affected by their spirituality but had difficulty articulating how this was the case. Russ said that his religious or spiritual beliefs affected his songwriting “inadvertently. They do. Unconsciously they do.” Ariel said, “Yes, my spiritual beliefs affect my songwriting. I’m not sure how specifically.”

Conclusion. This first theme of Connecting was so strongly represented in the data as to merit a significant number of subthemes to offer a more granular view of how participants constituted these experiences. Connecting occurs in different aspects of the songwriting practice, with self, others, and spirit. Experiences varied from a shift in emotional gears when listening to one’s own song to profoundly spiritual feelings in the context of performing. Participants largely believed there to be a connection between songwriting and spirituality. I end the description of this theme with a quote from Thea, which captures the extent of global connection possible through songwriting:

It’s given me a community of people I wouldn’t have otherwise—an international community of people I wouldn’t have otherwise, or people I wouldn’t have known and met otherwise, and been touched by. Touched, and been touched by.

Communicating

Where the Connecting theme relates to experiences arising from the *process* of the songwriting practice, the Communicating theme is focused on the *content* of what is created and shared through song and what the participant is hoping to communicate to listeners. All 12 participants (100%) expressed sentiments or recounted experiences during their interviews that reflected ways in which songwriting afforded them faculties for Communicating with others. In

this section, I present four subthemes of Communicating: Sharing Self, Sending A Message, Expressing Feelings, and Song Themes.

Sharing self. In talking about their songwriting process, participants identified various motivations for writing and sharing their songs. One of the most frequently cited was their desire to communicate through their music to share themselves and their experience with others. Gregory said: “I’m glad I have this ability to capture things and share it [*sic*] with others.” Ariel said, “It’s very rewarding and satisfying to share one’s voice. . . . It’s a really satisfying thing to be able to share who I am.” She explained that songwriting affords her a way to offer more of herself to others: “When I sing . . . I’m sharing a spiritual part of who I am that I don’t feel I really am able to share when I talk. I get to share a deeper part of myself.” Nick focused on the reach he would like to have in sharing himself: “I want to share that part of me with my community. I want to share it with people. I want to share it with the world.” JD spoke to the primacy of communicating with others through song for him:

Music and songs is [*sic*] probably one of the main ways that I communicate who I am with other people. And I’m not talking about my most intimate relationships, I’m talking about . . . well, I guess what you would call fans or people that enjoy the music that I do. . . . It’s important to me to be known that way.

Don realized that sharing himself through his music is central to his purpose:

[Performing is] Heaven! That’s where I belong! . . . I used to have dreams when I was a kid, I’d have dreams of being in front of all those people. I didn’t know what those dreams meant, but I do now. . . . It’s where I’m supposed to be. It’s the gift God gave me, and I want to share it with everybody because it doesn’t do any good to keep it to yourself.

Monica described how songwriting affords a way to present oneself to others:

There’s a part of me that (pause) is seen. . . . I guess it’s a controlled way, not that I feel controlling, but there is something of yourself that you’re presenting that (pause)—it’s right there. It’s how you chose to be seen, and you made it, and there it is. . . . So there’s something I think kind of wonderful about being able to craft a song and say what you want to say in the song.

Participants highlighted the capacity to record and distribute their songs as a particular way in which they could extend the reach of their communication of themselves to a global audience. In talking about her purpose for recording, Thea said:

The other focus would be to be able to share my music with the world. It's like having a baby and wanting it to go out into the world, and do good work, you know?! (laughs)
Being able to share myself with other people.

Jan noted the audience scaling effect possible through recordings: "You can only do so many live performances. But when you record something then it can go out into the world." Ariel echoed these sentiments:

That's been the most powerful aspect of being able to record is that people have heard my music all over the world, and I've gotten e-mails and feedback from people that I would never—it's really wonderful to think that my music can reach someone across the globe. I might not ever perform in a certain place so there's really a neat aspect of recordings and the Internet these days.

Russ laughed as he shared how a recording might lead to an unexpected outcome:

Ideally, you want somebody to hear and go, "That's the best thing I've ever heard. We'd like it to be used for the Olympics. Thank you!" The only way that you can get your music out to people without them seeing you is to record it.

Hal put it most succinctly: "Go directly to the recording device and then your audience is planetwide."

Sending a message. Another stated intention was that of Communicating a specific idea or message through song. Russ noted the possibility of using personal material for universal appeal, "so you can tell your story but couch it in terms that everyone can understand." Jan said, "The inspiration will come from my own experience, often something that I really feel is important to say." In discussing "Why Did You Do It, Why Don't You Care?" (Appendix B), a song about senseless violence and an assault on his son, Gregory explained,

It's a hateful world we live in and I think maybe I'm trying to get a message out to the people that there are other ways . . . getting a message out there not only about peace and anti-violence, but also about what happened to him and why it's so important to me.

Hal, who achieved success as a member of It's A Beautiful Day, which achieved a number one hit and a gold album, spoke of his sense of the responsibility inherent in Communicating with his listeners:

I believe that a musician of my experience and my stature in the musical community has a very serious responsibility to reflect on what is around him at the present moment, and what has been, and send a message to the present audience as to where things are going.

Dede described her goal to communicate an explicit message to her live audiences:

Performing should be about this message and the song I want you to hear, like I'm going to present it to you in a visual as well as audio-sensory method. I want to communicate to you. If I can't get you to cry when I'm being sad, if I can't get you to be happy when I'm being happy, if I can't get you to be upset or angry with me, then I'm not doing my job.

Jan also talked about her intent to create an effective distillation of her life experience or wisdom into a song:

Because, in my mind, I spent the first part of my life learning not just how to be an integrated, cool person, but building a craft of being a really good musician, and being a good singer, and getting all that sensibility. And then how do you transfer that into something I can hand you, something you can listen to in 4 minutes, and it's a little story condensed? It's like a lesson, or something you're going to listen to, and go, "Yeah!" and put your feet on the ground.

Expressing feelings. In the course of responding to my first interview question (Appendix A) regarding their path to becoming a songwriter, participants revealed that they found it difficult as a child to express their feelings. Combining lyrics and music in songs afforded them a new "language" by which to communicate their emotional experience. Even as adults, participants described how songs offered a more effective way for them to communicate. It seems that something about the form of song lyrics, coupled with the emotive possibilities of musical composition, allows for accessing and expressing emotions in ways that are not available through speech. Ariel commented, "There's real magic in, for me, being able to say something in the language that I was raised in [music in family environment] in a simple way that captures

an emotion.” Gregory said, “I was a very emotional child so I had a lot of things to get across that I couldn’t really say but I could sing.” Thea expressed this as well: “There was a time in my life where I felt like I didn’t have a language for my emotions. . . . The only place I could find to do that was through my songwriting.” Rita found songwriting a critical outlet for her emotions as a child:

Being a sensitive young girl, I really grew up in a very stable home with parents who loved me and took good care of me, but communication-wise they were from another planet. So all my tender, sensitive emotions and feelings and insecurities and whatever really didn’t have—(pause) . . . they were very internal. So there was that need to express and so that’s one motivation [for songwriting] is the personal.

Dede found it difficult to access and verbalize her feelings as a child and talked about how songwriting helped her develop these skills:

I have this problem—it’s called being raised Asian and learning to hide my feelings. And so uncovering those feelings has been a process in itself, where I’ve always expressed it [*sic*] through music. Someone could tell me a song and I could play exactly that feeling in a guitar melody . . . but I couldn’t express myself verbally. Now I’m starting to be able to express myself verbally a lot better. . . . I can do that now. I couldn’t before.

Songwriting seems to be a primary language for Jan: “It’s my mode of expression, the writing as well as the performing.” JD explained that Communicating through song not only offers a better language for him to express himself, but that the songs help him access truths he was not aware of until they came through in song:

Sometimes I find words are really hard to come by when I’m speaking—it’s like the songs know better than I do (laughs). So it becomes kind of a way of expressing myself that’s more elegant and more profound than I could possibly say in my own language.

Song themes. In order to learn more about the content participants were intending to convey through songwriting, Question 2c of the interview protocol (Appendix A) asked participants about the predominant themes for the lyrics and topics of their songs, and whether these had changed over the course of their songwriting career. I coded all responses in which participants discussed themes of songs, including songs selected for the interview or more

general discussion about the content of songs from their entire catalog of work. This section categorizes the songs' thematic content and qualities, applies the thematic content categories to the specific song selected by participants for discussion in the interview, and explores how participants reported that their song themes had evolved over time. (In order to avoid confusion about use of the term *theme* in this section, I have opted to use the term *category* to describe the aggregation of codes.)

Song thematic content. I grouped song thematic content into nine categories, based on my coding of participants' discussion of their song themes and topics in the interviews. Both specific songs chosen for the interview and songs or themes represented in the songwriter's lifetime of writing were included in this analysis. The resulting categories were Relationships, My Life And Growth, Inspiring Values, Nature, Social Issues, Comedy Songs, Children's Songs, Spirituality, and Miscellaneous. Appendix I documents examples of song topics for each category.

My coding rules, and thus the definitions of categories, were as follows. Codes were assigned to the Relationships category when participants explicitly mentioned thematic content of their songs related to romantic, sexual, or family relationships; writing about specific individuals; or about the experience of navigating these relationships. While relationships are clearly a fundamental aspect of life experience, I reserved the My Life And Growth category for coded material in which the participant spoke more generally about including content from his or her life, without explicit reference to relationships. This category was also used for coded excerpts in which participants talked about self-reflection or using songs to engage with their life experience to learn from it. The Inspiring Values category included codes related to aspirations for a better condition for humankind, such as peace, harmony, and reduced violence. The Nature

category captured codes related to imagery of the natural world in songs. Social Issues comprises codes for song themes addressing a contemporary issue facing society as a whole, or where a participant made explicit mention of a desire to communicate a social message through song about the condition of society. Where participants talked explicitly about their intent to create a humorous song or songs for children, these coded excerpts were assigned to the Comedy Songs or Children's Songs category, respectively. In the Spirituality category, I grouped codes pertaining to either explicitly religious or spiritual content in song lyrics, inquiry about spiritual questions, or a reflection about personal spirituality or its evolution. Song topics coded but not meeting the criteria for assignment to one of the other categories were grouped into Miscellaneous.

In response to my questions about the impact of religious or spiritual beliefs on songwriting (Appendix A), 11 participants (92%) reported that these had affected the lyrics of their songs in some way. Because this was so explicitly elucidated through my targeted questions about spirituality, I present details here about the nature of these lyrics.

Three participants (25%) mentioned songs in which the lyrics explicitly posed questions about death and dying or the afterlife:

The chorus basically goes, "Will I go to heaven, or be rushed off to hell? My life has been so messed up that I can't really tell. I've tried to go the right way but the wrong way I knew so well, so will I go to heaven or be rushed off to hell?" (Gregory)

There's a line in one of my songs that talks about, "I wonder what it'll be like when I die," or, "when we die, will I"—I can't remember the exact line—but "tumble and trickle across the sky, fade into the night?" Just the questions of what happens when we die. (Ariel)

In some ways in that song "Joyous and Free" [Appendix B] it's talking about how there's a finite amount of time you're alive. . . . Just thinking about mortality and the meaning of it all. I think that, by definition, is sort of a spiritual endeavor. (Nick)

Nine participants (75%) spoke more generally of how some expression of their religious or spiritual beliefs affected their choice of topics or lyrics, although some of these songs would not have been coded in the Spirituality category. For example, Gregory mentioned song topics that arose from his spiritual practice: “Right now [my lyrical content is] mostly peace, harmony. Maybe it’s because I’m practicing Buddhism.” These songs would have been coded to Inspiring Values. Thea’s songs, which would have been coded to Nature, also derive from her spirituality: “I’m mostly into earth-based spirituality, so I wrote a lot of songs about nature and rivers and canyons and mountains.”

Nick noted the link between his spiritual orientation and song topics, although he did not elaborate on the topics: “My own personal spirituality, and my sort of pseudo-Buddhism that I’m into, affects some of the motifs or some of the themes that run throughout my songs.” Don’s religious beliefs act to constrain his choice of topics and lyrics to what he feels are appropriate reflections of his beliefs, as well as avoiding topics not suitable for children:

My beliefs in God affect my songwriting a lot. I write a certain way. I think most of my songs—I try to write them so anybody can listen to them, children or adults. Because of my religion, I don’t really write violent or crazy songs.

Russ commented that many of his songs include a reference to some form of the mystery often called God, although he was clear that the choice of word is less important than what it represents:

I’m not afraid to use the word God in a song. But that’s just an idea. It’s just a good rhyming word to represent that—that part of life—the unknown part, the spiritual part, or religious part. . . . I think in most of my songs there’s a component that alludes to something that we don’t know what it is [*sic*] but it has some effect.

Talking about his and Jan’s collaboration, JD said that their song content reflected an expression of their spirituality: “[In] the kind of songs we write . . . we’re expressing the oneness of things and how we’re all arising from this incredible creativity and mystery.” In contrast, although

Ariel said that her spirituality did affect her songwriting, she said that she explicitly attempts to avoid direct expression of her beliefs in her lyrics: “I try not to preach in my songs what my beliefs are.”

Song thematic qualities. When invited to discuss the thematic content of their catalog of songs, participants frequently also described general qualities of their songs, which I elected to code separately. Three categories arose from this analysis: Inspirational, Universal, and Emotional.

The Inspirational quality category reflects the ways in which participants intended their songs to inspire or lift others up, or generate positive feelings and experience for their listeners. Ariel said: “My music very much tends, without any control on my part, to venture into subjects of empowerment and inspiration and finding your voice.” Jan said simply, “The music that I write is what I would call uplifting.” Russ expressed the intent for his music in terms of the quality he hopes to convey and his intent to inspire his audience:

The main theme for me is positive, is always positive. . . . It’s always been my feeling that I would rather have people leaving going, “I felt like the music lifted me up, I felt like the performance lifted me up, and I feel better for it.”

Participants also spoke about the fact that they either aspired to write songs with universal appeal, or that their personal experience, when expressed in song, turned out to produce a song with universal appeal. The Universal category captures coded excerpts about the quality of songs fitting these criteria. Jan said she wrote about “universal themes. It’s spiritual, it’s universally emotional. . . . If they ring true for me then hopefully they’ll ring true for somebody else.” Monica said: “There’s kind of a macro–micro meaning in a lot of my songs, where it’s about something that is happening in society but it’s presented as something more personal, or vice versa.” She explained the way in which listeners attributed their own meaning to the songwriter’s lyrics, finding a way to relate to them from their own experience: “They don’t

know what your words mean to you, but they mean something to them.” For Russ, this is an explicit intent: “I want my songs to be your songs.”

The Universal category of song quality was also reflected as participants discussed the specific song they had selected for the interview. Lyrics to these songs are included in Appendix B. Talking about “Tomorrow,” Russ said: “The universal theme of this is, ‘Don’t live in the past. Don’t dwell on your mistakes. And don’t overcelebrate what you were yesterday. It’s not that important. What’s important is what you’re doing now.’” Dede said of “Derby Girl”: “It’s personally affecting because everybody can relate to it.” Rita said of “Mill Valley”: “This one DJ from Canada said, ‘Everybody has a Mill Valley in his heart,’ and that people just long for that. I think that it just tapped into those sensibilities.” Ariel said of “Dance With Me”: “I wanted it to speak to a larger voice of how we all get along on this planet.”

The Emotional quality category captures ways in which participants described their songs’ thematic content as being about a particular emotion. Ariel said some of her songs were about “loss, longing.” Thea mentioned a song “about my loneliness, how alone I felt.” Nick said his songs represented a “rollercoaster spectrum of my emotions,” including “regret and guilt and pain.”

Participants’ selected songs. As noted in chapter 3, each participant was asked to select one song that had had significant personal impact on him or her to discuss in the interview. Song lyrics are reproduced in Appendix B. The topics of these 12 songs are shown in Table 9, with some songs meriting assignment to multiple categories, based on the ways in which their writers described the content and their intent and inspiration for the song, as well as on the lyrics themselves. In some cases, the lyrics directly reveal the theme. In others, with the benefit of the songwriter’s explanation, additional themes could be ascertained.

Table 9

Categorization of Songs Selected for Interview (N = 12)

Participant	Song Title	Song Categories
Rita Abrams	Mill Valley	My Life And Growth
Don Caruth	If It Ain't One Thing, It's Another	My Life And Growth
Nick Gallant	Joyous And Free	My Life And Growth, Inspiring Values
Jan Garrett	I Dreamed Of Rain	Inspiring Values, Nature, Spirituality
Gregory Irish	Why Did You Do It, Why Don't You Care?	Social Issues, Relationships, Inspiring Values
Dede Kittenhead	Derby Girl	Relationships, My Life And Growth
Russ Leal	Tomorrow	Inspiring Values, Relationships
JD Martin	Red Rock Canyon	Relationships, Nature, Spirituality
Monica Pasqual	Drive Away	Relationships
Thea Summer Deer	Take The Walls Down	Relationships, Social Issues, Inspiring Values
Ariel Thiermann	Dance With Me	Relationships, Inspiring Values
Hal Wagenet	Galileo	My Life And Growth

The most prevalent themes represented by the selected songs were Relationships (58% of songs), Inspiring Values (50%), and My Life And Growth (42%). It is interesting to note that, when asked to offer a song that had had significant personal impact, 11 participants (92%)

selected a song that could be categorized under Relationships or My Life And Growth. It appears that writing from one's life experience may lead to change and/or transformation. Inspiring Values was a theme in half of the songs, reinforcing the Making A Difference theme (to be discussed subsequently) and the Inspirational subtheme of Song Thematic Qualities.

Song theme evolution. Seven participants (58%) indicated that the themes of their songs have been broadly consistent throughout their writing career, while the other 5 (42%) reported an evolution in their song themes. Beginning with participants reporting consistency in their thematic content, Don said that he had always written about the material in his everyday life. Russ said that his theme of positive songs that lift people up had been consistent through the years. Jan said that her main theme of songs that encourage her listeners to “tune in to what’s really true and come from that place” had been very consistent: “That’s always been my focus. And you can state it over and over in any number of different ways, and different metaphors and different stories. And it is endless, but that’s the punch line.”

Evolution of thematic material seemed to come about through paralleling the personal growth or life experience of the writer. For example, Thea explained the shift in her songs’ content as “more spiritually inspiring and uplifting and not so cathartic so much.” JD said, “I’d say around ‘93 or something like that, I had what I would call a spiritual experience that began to change the direction of the songs.” For Nick, “One thing I watched grow over time is this theme of personal growth, individuation.” Dede explained the shift in her songwriting as, “start[ing] with very nonchalant musings that I saw and visualized, to the frustration and anger and hurt and love gone south. And now it’s irony.” She said, “A lot of my songs were angrier in different stages of my life, and if you put them from end to end they’d probably tell my life story.” Gregory reported writing songs as a youth about things like depressing relationships, taking a

hiatus from writing, and then restarting his songwriting much later with themes more focused on values like peace and nonviolence. He said, “I guess I was very upset as a kid so some of my songs—maybe it’s good I left them behind.” Monica noted a refinement to her songs over time: “When I look at my earlier songs, I feel that I’m more subtle in my feelings, just as I am as a person—that I have sort of a more nuanced look at love or at my place in the picture.”

Professional concerns affected the evolution of Rita’s thematic material:

I think as I became more of a professional songwriter I did it recreationally less. And so my songs went from being cathartic or expressive just for the sake of doing them and singing them for the sake of my own enjoyment to having to do it more for a living. In that situation, it would have been more of an indulgence to write just based on how I felt. And so I didn’t do it as much.

Conclusion. This section has presented the Communicating theme, concerned primarily with the content of songwriting. The songwriters in my study reported that songwriting offered them a language through which to share themselves with the world, to send a message, and to express their emotions in ways that frequently were not available to them through simple speech. Analysis of the topics and content of their songs revealed a broad array of material, ranging from relatively mundane treatment of everyday life to songs infused with spirit and intended to lift others up. I characterized these into nine content categories and also captured three quality categories for songs. Eleven of the 12 songs brought into the interviews as having had significant personal impact on their writers fell within either the Relationships or My Life And Growth song theme categories, with themes relating directly to personal experience. Seven participants (58%) reported consistency in their song themes over their lifetime of writing. For those who reported evolution, it seemed that personal development or spiritual growth were partly responsible for the shift in songs’ thematic content.

Wellbeing

Seven participants (58%) explained how writing and sharing their songs had had a positive impact on their Wellbeing. Ariel said it was a “positive force in my life.” Don said, “It just makes you feel good.” Dede noted: “If I’m happy and I’m playing, my stress level’s a lot lower. But if I’m not, I’m frustrated and I start pulling my hair out, and I start being snippy and short.” Hal said that songwriting “improves the wellbeing of the [songwriter].” Gregory remarked that, in a positive way for him, “songwriting keeps my mind active.” Hal commented on the cleansing experience he derives from songwriting:

If you can express artistically you feel cleaner and purer. And as you relate to the guy at the post office counter or the jaywalker, you’re going to relate to him differently than if you’re frustrated and bottled up and mentally constipated by an imperfect artistic expression. I think that the very fact that I can get together with [my band] Redbud on a practically weekly basis, and play and express myself is very cleansing to me and improves many aspects of my life.

A commonly articulated benefit to Wellbeing was the calming or soothing effect participants reported experiencing as a result of their songwriting process. Gregory said simply, “It comforts me.” Hal reported a calming of his mind: “If I am confident in my ability to express in an art form like this, other aspects of my life are more positive as well. It clears out the useless chatter that’s in your mind.” Rita spoke more than once in the interview about how her songs relieve her emotional distress and help calm her emotionally: “I’ve had a remarkable experience with . . . self-soothing through the writing of songs.” Jan described a similar experience of actively using her songs to calm herself:

If I can write a song that will inspire me in some way—what I say often is if I wake up freaked out in the middle of the night and I can remember one of those songs, if I can remember the words, it soothes me. It calms me down, and gets me centered and energized and gets me back on track.

Affirmation

Ten participants (83%) reported experiences of recognition, validation, and affirmation from creating and sharing their original songs, as a result of some aspect of themselves being acknowledged, reflected, and positively valued. The experience of Affirmation had several foci: validation of musicianship and artistic authenticity; affirmation of identity as songwriter; recognition of and pride in songwriting abilities; and feeling understood. One way in which writing and sharing one's songs affirms the songwriter is through validating his or her sense of the authenticity and uniqueness of their expression as musicians. For example, Hal explained how he has become comfortable with his individuality of expression:

If I were to approach a new song today, I have a sense that I actually do know what I'm doing now, I have a sense that I have command . . . good command of my palate of musical tones and I have a personal technique that is . . . I don't have to be like anybody else anymore.

In a similar way, Ariel reported an Affirmation of her choice of how she expresses herself artistically, and currently having

more freedom than I've ever had because I have experience that I didn't have in the early years, and I also know what's going to serve me, so there's a lot more possibility for being the artist that I really want to be. Not for anyone else.

Others spoke about the ways in which their identity as a songwriter had been validated and affirmed through creating and sharing their songs. Rita said that "it has been very much of a basis, very much at the root of what I do and who I am and I'm very grateful for it, for having that skill." Hal recounted the significance of being validated as a singer-songwriter, where in much of his career the focus has been on his musicianship as an instrumentalist:

And actually to have people ask for my original compositions and to ask me to play at a singer-songwriter symposium when I was not known as a singer-songwriter—I'm known as an instrumentalist—that was big for me. That's the little, secret part of me.

Rita noted the affirming effect for her of being seen by others as an active songwriter: “I was very pleased realizing that I’m a person, I’m a woman, who [*sic*] people identify with always working on something.” For Dede, the experience of hearing her recordings played in the media or being written up in the press led to a mirroring of her identity as a musician and songwriter, with positive effects:

Hearing yourself, it’s just the strangest thing. I can’t explain. You’ll be, like, “Wow, that’s us, that’s me!” It’s just interesting, when you get coverage, when a magazine writes you up and you open it up and you’re, like, “whoa, that’s us!” We had a review of the CD that came out in *Reno Tahoe Tonight* magazine. It came out last month, and I blew up the screenshot of it and posted it on Facebook and went, “Oh my god, it’s us!” It was kind of cool.

Although I did not ask Rita directly about the personal effect of experiencing her hit song heralded in the press, the tone of pride was evident in her voice as she told me:

When “Mill Valley” [Appendix B] came out, I was a teacher and when I suddenly had this hit record, I suddenly was transformed into a star. I was in all—I mean we were in *Newsweek* and *Time* and *Life* magazine, and all of those. *Rolling Stone*.

Some participants spoke about Affirmation through receiving recognition of their songwriting abilities from others. (This is distinct from the effect of feedback about the impact the song may have had on the listener, which is discussed in detail in the Making A Difference theme.) For Rita,

How it’s [songwriting] changed me is that it gives me a lot of respect from people who know my work and praise me for it. I mean I’m always very flattered and it’s just very nice. It’s a very nice ego gratification.

Thea spoke frankly about the importance of Affirmation from others’ response to her songs, both in terms of valuing herself and through recognition of the quality of her music:

That feedback is what keeps me going. I don’t like to think that I need so much affirmation and validation but I do! I don’t depend on it like when I was a kid and needing my mother to uh (pause) . . . I did for years. I worked on that for years, on needing her approval. It’s not like I need approval. I need that affirmation, you know? . . . It’s an affirmation. It affirms that it has substance and value and validity.

Nick was straightforward about his desire for Affirmation: “I do want feedback. I do want praise.” JD admitted his hope for this as well: “As a professional songwriter, I was always hoping for acknowledgment in that world—getting the Song of the Year at some event, or something like that.” Some songwriters in the study experienced Affirmation in the form of pride about their work. Rita spoke of “the added empowerment of being able to mold it [an experience expressed through song] into something that makes sense and that you’re proud of.”

Russ said:

I am really proud of the fact that I can do it. I didn’t know that I could do it. It’s like a surprise. Like I knew I could play instruments. . . . But then I started writing songs, and I go, “OK, I can write songs, and they’re good!” I hope that doesn’t sound like I’m bragging. I just mean I can tell a good song from a bad song, and they’re good. . . . And that (pause) I’m just super proud of that.

Dede spoke of the pride she feels in reviewing her library of recordings, independent of whether she received financial rewards for her music:

I’ve probably never made money in more than half the bands I’ve been in. . . . My bank account doesn’t reflect the money that’s made in some of the music that’s been up there. And I’ve got ‘em under different pseudonyms and I don’t care. It’s more bragging rights and, like, I can put it on my bookshelf over there and look at it and say, “I did that.”

Recognition of the quality of the songwriter’s work by other musicians was also experienced as affirming. Dede sounded proud as she said, “I play it for other musicians, and they’re, like, ‘Wow, I didn’t expect this to be here. That’s an interesting concept here.’” Monica described the response of her studio musicians to “Drive Away” (Appendix B), the song she discussed in the interview:

I think the musicians and engineer that I worked with and people there had never heard that song either. . . . I don’t totally recollect, but I’m feeling like people were quite blown away by the song—One that they hadn’t heard, and we were in the middle of recording an album that was much more produced, and it was, like, “Wow, that song has to go on the album, as it is!”

Feeling understood and accepted was another way in which writing and sharing songs was affirmative for participants. JD said that when he performs “Red Rock Canyon” (Appendix B) he feels “like I’m being seen in some really transparent, profound way . . . being seen as my authentic self, being recognized, affirmed.” When she described performing her chosen song, “Dance With Me” (Appendix B), Ariel said, “I feel understood with this song . . . I definitely felt received.” Nick described playing his selected song, “Joyous and Free” (Appendix B), to close friends and family, and said, “the reaction has all been one of real sort of—(pause). I really feel embraced there.” Nick also experienced the song itself as affirming of him in a profound way:

Like many of the songs I’ve written, the words kind of came out of my mouth onto my paper and they kind of almost spoke to me. It was almost like a dialog with myself. What I find is that sometimes I write lyrics and not even I totally understand exactly what I meant. And then I listen back and go, “Wow, I meant *this*.” So this song’s so powerful to me because it’s almost like a subconscious proclamation to me of: “Nicky, you want to be joyous and free. Nicky, you want to let go of all this pain you’re carrying with you, and all this pain that you think you’ve caused people. And you want (pause) at the end of the day, at the end of your life, when the sun goes down, you want to be grounded and loved and these are the things you want.” And it’s sort of like a personal affirmation.

Personal Growth

The songwriters in my study reported ways in which creating and sharing their songs had led to Personal Growth, including increased self-knowledge and self-mastery, processing and integrating challenging experiences or emotions through expressing feelings and meaning-making so as to reduce their psychologically negative impact, and developing new skills. This theme is divided into three subthemes: Healing, Processing Experience, and Empowerment.

Healing. Five participants (42%) explicitly used the terms *therapy*, *therapeutic*, or *healing* in discussing the impact songwriting had had on them in general terms. (Specific ways in which songwriting had a therapeutic effect are discussed in the other subthemes of Personal Growth.) Nick said, “I see how in some ways my songwriting has been a form of therapy for me.” Hal also made an explicit connection: “One of the reasons that I write these things is they

are therapeutic for me.” Rita commented, “I’ve had a remarkable experience with healing myself and self-soothing through the writing of songs. Ariel said this too: “I think with every song I write, there’s a little healing that occurs.” Thea said, “My music is healing, healing me. . . . It has healed me, literally.”

Processing experience. Nine participants (75%) spoke of some way in which processing their life experience through songwriting activities had allowed them to reach new awareness about themselves or situations they were facing. Externalizing painful emotions through writing song lyrics and giving these feelings musical expression is a primary motivation for some participants to write songs, and may relieve the suffering they experience. Rita explained in general terms why she thinks that expressing feelings allowed her to move through difficult experiences:

I believe that most therapists agree that it’s all about expression. Somehow, the human being needs to get those feelings from inside to outside. . . . I guess some people heal themselves and everybody does it in their own way, but generally it is necessary for a person to process, to express—to talk, to verbalize, or to paint, or to whatever the process is—but to express those feelings in one way or another. Once you express them, it’s almost like it’s a toxin that’s inside of you and it comes out. It releases it.

She went on to offer specific examples of how this had functioned for her with her songwriting:

[My daughter] called me late at night, and was having some difficulty, and I was so desperate that I couldn’t be with her to help her. It was very painful to be that far away, so I sat down at the piano and I wrote this song: . . . “When you’re there and I am here, And it’s hard to calm the fear, Just remember that my love goes with you everywhere.” And by the end of the song it was like I was healed. . . . Another time I was in a relationship that had to end and I found out several months later that in the interim . . . he had slept with my best friend. . . . And I was beside myself, I was so desolate. So I sat down and wrote a song, and really just poured my guts into this song about the lover and your best friend. And I was healed at the end of that song.

The first time Gregory performed “Why Did You Do It, Why Don’t You Care?”

(Appendix B), whose last verse speaks to a brutal assault on his son, he found some relief from his emotional isolation: “It was good to get it out because for 5 days and nights when we were in

the hospital, he was under an alias so no one could find him. I couldn't tell a lot of people."

Thea, likewise, reported finding it beneficial to externalize her experience: "Songwriting gives expression to things that could have otherwise completely devastated me. So I was able to get it out of my head, out of my body, and then be able to move on." Don talked about creating recordings to allow him to move through material: "I have ideas, I like to get them out of my head so I can move onto something else."

Hal's song, "Galileo" (Appendix B), was an expression of his frustration with his attempts to get the band It's A Beautiful Day, which he had joined, to incorporate some of his musical ideas into its repertoire:

This particular song . . . was representative of my struggle to get my songs heard and my ideas and my perception of how things work before our public and into the consciousness of the band. Galileo was persecuted for his beliefs and for speaking the truth as he saw it but he didn't give up. Even though he was incarcerated and gagged by the powers that be at the time, he persevered and he eventually won out. That little song essentially describes the exact process I was going through with the band.

Ariel described her songwriting as equivalent to a journaling practice: "The kind of songwriter I am . . . I'm sort of like an audio journaler. It's like my journaling and my processing comes out at the piano versus in a diary." Describing her songwriting process using improvisation at the piano, she said, "I do this process as a therapeutic experience for myself because it's like a processing. It's like my own therapy." She explained how this functions:

If there's something going on in my life . . . maybe there's a little bit of a broken heart going on, or maybe there's something in the world that's happening that I feel I have to process, I'll just start singing. And I'll have a piece of paper on the piano, and just jot words down or ideas.

Noting that "songwriting has definitely existed for a main reason and that's for myself, to process emotion," Ariel said, "I basically wrote my way through . . . the challenges of high school," because it offered "a way to reflect, and move through my emotions, and understand."

She said that “Dance With Me” (Appendix B), the song she elected to discuss during the interview, was “like a synthesis of an experience that created a completion emotionally for me.”

Participants described making sense or meaning out of an experience as another benefit of Processing Experience through songwriting, at times deriving from active reflection, at others through the song revealing something previously not known consciously to the songwriter. Meaning-making may lead to a sense of resolution, integration, or healing. For example, Monica described her impetus for writing:

For me, it's more if I feel energy or probably if I have something that needs to be processed . . . I don't necessarily know what I'm talking about when I start a song, but often its meaning comes alive as the song is getting written.

Thea, too, said that songwriting had “given me direction and purpose and meaning.” She explained how this offered her fresh understanding and emotional resolution:

What is the release that I'm needing? What is the conflict that I'm resolving? What is the inner turmoil that needs to be gotten out of my head so that I can have some distance from it or some perspective?

She believes that songwriting gives her access to her unconscious and the meaning-making that is available through surfacing this material: “It has helped me to mine that archetypal realm that lives in the unconscious. It's a very archetypal process of meaning and symbology and metaphor.” She described the process as follows:

That symbolic language as it gets crafted into any work of art gives purpose and meaning to what otherwise I might not have been able to make sense out of. . . . I'm always looking for what is the blessing in the trial and the tribulation and trying to resolve that through my songwriting. So the song might take you on a journey through these landscapes that are destruction or pain or grief or whatever, but always resolving in the healing of the heart by having gone through that journey. Sometimes there's questions that come up from my music, like, “Why did this happen?”, or “Why did he leave me?”, or “Why are we destroying the earth?” . . . When you go inside for your answers—I'm going inside to be able to put those feelings out in a way that is a process of having another perspective from which to maybe gain a greater understanding. So I feel like it's helped me in that mining of the unconscious, so that when you go to the depths of despair it's not just an empty place.

Ariel also alluded to the meaning-making aspect of songwriting: “I’m a reflective songwriter who’s trying to make sense out of this mysterious journey of life.” Talking about how songwriting is therapeutic for him, Nick said that it had been “a way to sort of explore, think about, and find more meaning in some of those themes that I find within my relationships.” He also noted that through “Joyous And Free” (Appendix B), the song he discussed in the interview, he had come to new insights about his life, and realized that:

Our marriage was on the verge of breaking up and I now realize in retrospect I really, really, really didn’t want it to. There was part of me that thought that I wanted to, and part of this song was telling myself [*sic*], “This is what you want, to be joyous and free.” And it’s almost like the big thing that was the turning point for me in my relationship was, “Wait a minute! Those things that you want, you can have those in the relationship you’re in!” . . . So anyway, it’s a very, very important song to me.

Examination of participants’ song themes (Table 9) corroborates the Processing Experience theme, and reveals the extent to which the songwriters in my study process their experience through the choice of topics for their songs. The song theme categories of Relationships, My Life And Growth, and Social Issues each captured thematic content relevant for Processing Experience, and were previously described in the Song Themes section in this chapter.

Empowerment. This final subtheme of Personal Growth reflects the ways in which the songwriting process leads to participants experiencing a sense of greater self-knowledge, personal strength, capacity, mastery, or ability to act in their daily lives. Ariel said that songwriting is “a contribution to getting to know ourselves.” For Thea, songwriting “has taught me how powerful I really am.” Russ exhibited great pride in his discovery that he had ability as a songwriter: “I am really proud of the fact that I can do it. I didn’t know that I could do it.” Monica reported, “when I started writing songs, I felt like I’d found myself. . . . It was definitely in music was where I felt the most whole.”

Empowerment through songwriting was also experienced as taking control of a situation:

I think it's also taking control. It's going from feeling helpless from being a victim of a situation . . . and you're out of control and there's nothing you can do about it. And then when you craft [a song], when you use your skill and your talent, to craft it into a cohesive piece, it's empowering. (Rita)

Thea reported how, with the help of songwriting, she had been able to keep moving forward through difficult times: "There's many places in my life where I've become very depressed but I don't think that I've ever gotten stuck anywhere in my life as a result of having this expression [songwriting]." In the interview, she described how she had worked through her experience of being too dependent on others for her sense of self, and that through putting herself out in her songs and learning not to be so sensitive to feedback, she had gained enhanced trust in herself:

I wasn't a drug user and an alcoholic but I was definitely a codependent! It's been that process of getting to the point where I trust myself enough that I don't care what other people think, even though I still look for feedback. . . . Ultimately the feedback's not going to devastate me.

For Ariel, "the writing, recording and performing process [has] helped me come into myself and helped me feel just grounded."

Overcoming shyness and developing confidence in oneself was another form of Empowerment described by participants: "In songwriting and in performing, I found myself. I was pretty shy" (Monica). Ariel also found performing her songs helped her develop confidence: "I've gotten more and more confident and just comfortable being who I am and talking onstage." Russ explained:

The success of the songwriting and the success of the band has [*sic*] made me less shy and more outgoing. I was mostly one of those kinds of people that would not engage people, but now I'm more of a "Hi, how are you?" person.

He also reported feeling much less sensitive to sharing his new song ideas with his band mates:

"I'm less afraid of making a mistake musically." Thea made a similar point about getting beyond fear of judgment in working with cowriters:

It teaches me about trust and intimacy. That I feel safe enough with somebody to be able to feel that safe that I can then be that vulnerable to express myself and say what I'm feeling. I mean, we censor ourselves. I censor myself so much. In that [songwriting] process, it's like that drops.

Making A Difference

The theme that struck me most forcefully from analysis of the data is that of the immense satisfaction participants derived from receiving feedback about having made a positive difference in listeners' lives through the sharing of their original songs. All participants (100%) mentioned this in their interview. For some, there was an explicit motivation and desire to be able to touch others with their music or to make a global contribution. For others, learning about the impact of a song was an unexpected positive outcome after the composition was complete. Receiving information about the impact of his or her song validated the songwriter both at the level of artistic expression and in terms of personal self-worth. While the themes of Wellbeing, Affirmation, and Personal Growth reflect change and transformation participants experienced through creating and sharing original songs, the Making A Difference theme explicitly references the changes or transformative impact of the practice of songwriting that accrue to both songwriter and listener. In this sense, Making A Difference may be thought of as the overarching outcome of the practice, made possible through the building blocks identified in the other themes.

Participants discussed a number of ways in which they intended to make a contribution through their songs, from inspiration to service to invoking feelings to nourishing to making a better world. JD said, "I would like to have some people that would feel like the songs that I write have made some sort of difference in their lives. That's important to me too." Nick said, "I want to make my global contribution." Nick also discussed a plan to make some of his music available for free to those living within a certain radius of his house, saying, "supporting your

local community is exciting to me, and though I don't do anything like building houses or make anything that I can give to my community, I make music and I want to give that back to my community." Thea echoed this theme: "I feel like I'm serving my community with my music." Noting that she "want[s] to be the solution and not the problem," Jan described distilling what she has learned on her personal journey in a way that may inspire others:

I want to take what that essence is for me and put it into plain English . . . [such that] it's something that anybody can hear and it really rings true for them. And they go, "Wait a minute! Wow!" and they tune back into that. And maybe they can live their life in that place. . . . To make a better world . . . that's always been my focus.

She elaborated the kind of contribution she hoped to effect with her songs:

I want to write a song that is so true and so meaningful, where the lyric and the music work so powerfully together, that somebody can hear it and it changes their cellular configuration. It lines them up, so that they are in connection with who they really are.

She said, "I've been in sort of a legacy thing, leaving something that's nutritional for other people." Rita described ways in which she likes to make a difference: "I love the feeling of making people laugh with what I do. Or making people feel deeply." Russ's desire to lift his audience up and infuse positive energy was discussed in the Song Thematic Qualities subtheme section in this chapter. Jan shared this aspiration:

When I'm performing, there's an agreement that they're sitting in the audience and I get the mike and I'm on stage, so I'd better do something that's going to be really lovely for everybody, me as well as them. It's going to uplift us and feed us, it's going to make us laugh, it might make us cry, but we're going to leave being really grateful to be alive.

Thea evoked religious or spiritual service in describing the contribution she makes: "I feel like my music is a ministry and I've been ministering to myself through that expression, but it has also become a ministry that I bring out [to others]."

The previous quotes illustrate how participants described their intent and motivation to make a difference through their songs. How do participants' songs actually affect their listeners and how does this affect the songwriter? Direct feedback from audiences and those listening to

recordings (often provided through e-mail to songwriters) allows participants to understand the impact of their songs. Thea noted:

The beauty of performing a song that you wrote is to see how it goes out and touches somebody. To then have them come up to you afterwards and say, “You made me cry, you changed my life, you rocked my world! How did you know that that was what’s going on for me too?”

Jan, who had used a metaphor of feeding others through her work in discussing her motivations for songwriting, extended this metaphor to describe the experience of performing “I Dreamed Of Rain” (Appendix B):

From the first times that we did that, it was electric. It felt like, as the song was unfolding, there was this huge benevolence coming through and being offered to the audience and the audience was totally getting it. So it would be kind of like me preparing a fantastic dinner party, cooking everything beautifully, offering it to all my guests, and everyone going, “Oh my God, I love that. I love the concept. I love the song!” But before they even said that, they were just eating it and enjoying it.

Several participants offered explicit anecdotes of a particular song’s effect on a listener.

For example, Russ was visibly moved in the interview as he described this experience:

Russ: And I had gotten this kid. I had inherited the kid from another teacher, and was working with him. . . . And the mom came in for the meeting . . . and she goes, “I just want to tell you that I was bedridden for the last year. I couldn’t get off my couch.” . . . And she said, “The thing that kept me from being depressed was listening to your CDs. I would listen to your songs and it always gave me hope.” I’m just going, “Whoa! OK.”

Interviewer: What did that bring for you?

Russ: Tears.

Jan recalled writing a song to offer to a grieving family, and, in the pauses in her speech, seemed to be experiencing as she talked the depth of feeling engendered by knowing she had made a difference:

We wrote a song for a family whose daughter, who was just a junior in college, committed suicide. . . . She was a very shy girl, but she wanted to be a singer-songwriter. She had an idea for a song. She had a title. “Love Wins” was [her] title and she committed suicide. So JD and I went, “We should write that song.” . . . And we came up with a very beautiful song, which ends up um (pause), what can I say? (pause) being

comforting for her family. And people who listen to this who don't even know the backstory love this song. Because it's so infused with true emotion.

Ariel described how "Dance With Me" (Appendix B) affected a particular listener:

One example of a listener expressing their [*sic*] gratitude was someone who was going through a divorce. And this song, for whatever reason, really, really connected to him and his process, and it just became a really important part, important support for him through the process of his divorce. And just sitting in his truck crying, it helped him feel. I've gotten that feedback—that this song has helped people feel.

Rita's song, "Mill Valley" (Appendix B), affected far-flung listeners, and she talked about its impact and her own response:

Rita: He was in the military and he wrote to me how he was in the Gulf War, and he was in the trenches fearing for his life. And my little song started running around in his brain, and he felt like it saved his life. Just amazingly dramatic stories like this. . . .

Interviewer: What is the effect on you of people sharing those experiences?

Rita: Just very touched. Touched and appreciative that they let me know. Gratified that something I wrote could do that, and something I wrote in complete innocence without any intention to do that. Who knew, you know?

In these excerpts, Rita experienced being touched, appreciative, and gratified in learning about the impact of her song, while Russ was moved to tears. Participants expressed a range of emotions or experiences as a result of Making A Difference for others through their music.

Gregory experienced comfort and reassurance as a result of his contribution:

As long as I have some friends who are listening and go, "Hey, I really liked that song, it had great meaning," it's very comforting. It's very reassuring that I did a good thing and I came out with a song that means a lot to people.

For, Ariel it was validation: "To get an e-mail or to get one person saying that they love my song or my music, it's a really wonderful validation. That makes me feel, like, 'Don't ever stop doing this.'" Nick said, "It made me feel powerful in that it made me feel like I had a global contribution, which was beautiful." Monica described her response to getting feedback: "There is something—some part of the ego—that is just really touched when other people hear it and like it." Gratification was mentioned by Rita:

It's very wonderful [to hear how my song has affected someone], especially when I am tending to feel like I haven't done enough, I haven't made my mark, I haven't reached my people, I haven't done enough good in the world. And then I get one of these e-mails, and it will be very touching, and I'll realize just how accidentally out of the blue I did affect a lot of people, and that's gratifying.

This was echoed by Jan: "I get e-mails from people who say, 'Thank you for writing such and such a song. It really helped me through a tough time in my life.' . . . It's very gratifying." She talked about her response to the way in which "I Dreamed Of Rain" (Appendix B) had affected her listeners:

It's really clear to me that something very, very big was coming through me at the time I wrote that down, because people unpack it and they're just like hugely moved. So it makes me happy. It makes me feel kind of in awe.

JD reported gratitude and satisfaction:

The sense of satisfaction knowing that I have communicated what came through me and put it out there and then it comes back—there is really no more wonderful feeling than that, so I'm very grateful when that happens.

Making A Difference emerged as a powerful theme from participants' descriptions of positively affecting listeners' lives. However, one counterexample was offered. Russ sounded perplexed as he described the following experience:

I did get one nasty letter one time but I think she was ill . . . because the things she was saying were so far removed from—we all read it as a band, and we were going, "Did she mail this to the wrong people?" Like, that we were misogynistic, like overtly vulgar—just the antithesis of what we are. I looked at it, going, "What, did I move my hips, did I dance too much?" I didn't even know what it would have been!

This comment highlights the cocreative nature of the songwriting practice, as the artist is called to reflect on his or her work as a result of listeners' engagement with and varied responses to the image. Feedback of any kind offers the possibility of expanding and transforming understanding. Making A Difference comes about through this intersubjective process.

Concluding Remarks

The thematic content analysis of the data presented in the sections above reveals many positive experiences of change and transformation as a result of songwriting, captured under the themes of Connecting, Communicating, Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference. However, participants occasionally noted ways in which they had experienced negative effects from the practice, presented here to portray the most balanced picture possible in response to the research question.

Dede mentioned a number of negative effects songwriting, performing, and recording had on her life, seemingly due to her passion in prioritizing her musical expression. These included financial sacrifices, the physical toll of toting gear to gigs, exercising less frequently than she would have liked to because she was prioritizing music over workouts in her busy schedule, and strained relationships, about which she said:

Relationships get destroyed. I was supposed to go meet with a friend, and she's caretaking both her parents right now, and I didn't get a chance to go see her on Sunday because I had rehearsal and, you know (pause) I couldn't do it. So I'll do it via phone, or whatever.

Monica, likewise, spoke to the challenges of navigating financial unpredictability:

At times I've felt annoyed, like, "Oh my God, this is such a hard life, this is so crazy! I'm too old to not know how much money I'm going to make in the next month." All these kinds of things feel like a burden in some ways.

Hal remarked that experiences early in his career with his band mates may have adversely affected his productivity:

I suppose that the early rejection of some of my concepts made me change my direction. I might have become a much more prolific writer. I have the ability to be but I never developed the skill to do it.

While it is important to acknowledge these negative effects, it appears that they are significantly overshadowed by the large volume of positive outcomes reported by participants and presented above in the major themes of the data analysis.

The Researcher's Experience

The heuristic inquiry method (Moustakas, 1990) begins with an autobiographical connection to the research topic on the part of the researcher: "The initial 'data' is within me; the challenge is to discover and explicate its [*sic*] nature" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 13). Moustakas (1990) explained that heuristic inquiry inherently transforms the researcher: "In the process, I am not only lifting out the essential meanings of an experience, but I am actively awakening and transforming my own self. Self-understanding and self-growth occur simultaneously in heuristic discovery" (p. 13). Thus, the experience (data) of the researcher is integral to the design, conduct, and results of a heuristic inquiry study. I detailed how my personal experience was expressed in the design and conduct of this study in accordance with heuristic inquiry methods in chapter 3. In this section, I describe the results of my own process of pursuing this research about the impact of songwriting on the songwriter.

In chapter 1, I described my own journey of becoming a musician and songwriter and discussed a song I had written, the creation and sharing of which had had a significant personal impact on me. This exercise paralleled Question 1 of my interview protocol (Appendix A) and the request I made of my participants to select a song to discuss. However, this telling of my own story occurred at the beginning of the research process when I was drafting the proposal for this study, and preceded my engagement with my participants. I interpreted my personal experience as an indication that songwriting might allow the working through of painful emotional material, and that sharing a song might also transform the songwriter, as had been the

case for me. This led to my research question, as I contemplated whether other songwriters might also experience transformation through their practice.

It is interesting to situate my development as a musician and a songwriter within the context of my participants' summary demographics (chapter 4). Like them, I had an early engagement with musical activities, beginning piano and violin at around 5 years of age. However, I did not write my first song with lyrics until I was in my late 40s, and had had just a year or two of songwriting experience when I conceived this research, compared with the mean of 36.3 years for my participants. I was curious to see how my more recently emergent experience of songwriting might relate to theirs. After coding the interview transcriptions, and as a result of ideas that had come out of the incubation step of heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) while I had set aside the core of the codetree, as described in chapter 3, I decided to code my own story as written in chapter 1. Impressions I had been forming as I went through the interview coding had suggested to me that there would be some substantial overlap.

My experience was coded into several of the themes described in this chapter. My song theme fell into the Relationships category. I coded the way in which I had processed the rupture in my friendship with the aid of my song under the Processing Experience subtheme of Personal Growth, as exemplified by this excerpt: "My creative process with this song gave me a depth of understanding about my grief at the loss of the friendship, and helped me to work through it to find a place of acceptance and hope for future reconciliation." I coded other aspects of my narrative under the Communicating theme. My experience that sharing the song "opened me to my feelings, inviting me to experience them flowing through me, rather than retreating to my head and rationalizing away their significance" fit with the Expressing Feelings subtheme of Communicating, as I found a way to access and express my emotional experience of the rupture.

I coded the following excerpt to the Connecting With Listeners subtheme, which, as described earlier, included participants' experiences of vulnerability associated with sharing songs: "I felt deeply vulnerable as I exposed through my song how much this person had meant to me and how affected I was by the loss." My experience that "I felt held, supported, and witnessed by the audience" as I shared my song fell under Affirmation, as well as the Connecting With Listeners subtheme. I cried when I first captured the lyrics for the song, an experience I coded to the Connecting With Emotions theme. Although I have not confirmed this, I believe that my sharing of the song with the friend about whom it was written may have touched her in such a way as to have shifted her relationship to the experience of our rupture and induced her to communicate her own view about what happened. In this way, this highly personal Connecting With Listeners may have also led to Making A Difference.

As discussed in chapter 3, I sought permission from my participants to attend recording sessions or live performances where possible. No convenient recording sessions occurred in the timeframe of my data collection; however, I was able to attend live performances of 6 participants (50%): Dede in Kittenhead, Don in The Joint Chiefs, Jan and JD as a duo, Monica in Blame Sally, Russ in Extra Large. I journaled after each one. My experience as a member of the audience seemed to validate the Connecting With Listeners subtheme, which was, of course, based on participants' experience as performers rather than as listeners:

I felt a surge of joy as the first few notes of the intro played and felt literally sucked onto the dance floor, with a desire to move and to join. As the song went on, I was aware of feeling connected to and interacting with the dancers around me, mirroring or meeting some of their moves, laughing out loud, singing out loud, casting my eyes up to the stage and lighting up inwardly and outwardly as Russ's giant smile and exhilarating energy beamed forth, pulling me further into the shared experience of the moment. (Extra Large show)

As they played "Trouble," I looked around the room and saw a combination of laughter and wry recognition on the faces of the audience at the familiar sentiment expressed in the song. It was as if we all shared a moment of mutual acknowledgement of a shared

human experience, of laughing at ourselves, brought to life and to the present by the song. It looked as though the band members were enjoying the connection with us and each other as they felt all of us participating in the song. (Blame Sally show)

Listening to Jan and JD perform the songs they had chosen to discuss in their interviews was particularly moving. With such a depth of understanding of how their songs had come into being and their significance for their writers, I felt strongly connected to each of them as they sang, and a sense of gratitude for their willingness to offer so much of themselves to others. Jan's song "I Dreamed Of Rain" (Appendix B) had been requested by an audience member prior to the show. California was in a state of emergency due to drought conditions at the time, and there was a much needed rainstorm passing through on the night of the concert. As they performed the song, it seemed to weave all of us together in a collective moment of appreciation of the importance of our awareness of nature and our mutual interdependence. I wondered how many others besides me were contemplating the larger questions of climate change and our personal responsibility to act as we listened. This seemed to me to reflect the listeners' experience of the Making A Difference theme.

I also experienced the reciprocal building of connection and energy through the give and take between audience and performers described by participants in the Connecting With Listeners subtheme. Jan and JD asked the audience to sing parts of the song or to sing back what was sung (call and response). I noticed many of us beaming or leaning in to hear others' choices of harmonies around us as the collective sound built to a spontaneous multipart swell. During his performance, Russ left the stage several times to mingle with those of us on the dance floor, singing and dancing, as did the lead singer of Dede's band, Kittenhead.

This section has presented my experience as a researcher in the heuristic inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990). The next section considers evidence for the impact of the process on participants.

Participants' Interview Experience

As I was conducting the interviews, and perhaps because of my training as a clinical psychologist in which tracking the metathemes of conversations is an important skill, I became aware of the ways in which participants were expressing the impact of the interview process on them as we spoke. This was not directly related to the research question, but since their comments about this were contained within the transcripts, I decided to code these to capture more systematically how participants were affected by the interview process. Four subthemes emerged: Appreciation, Curiosity, Responding With Songs, and Gaining Insight. I present these here as results of the study and defer interpretation to the wider discussion about the research in chapter 6.

Appreciation. Four participants (33%) expressed appreciation for the opportunity to participate in the study, for the opportunity to talk in depth about their experience of songwriting, or for one of my comments. Both Hal and Nick seemed to appreciate being attended to and listened to in discussing their songwriting and musical experience in depth. Hal said, “It’s not often a person wants to actually listen to some of these ramblings.” Nick said:

I really appreciate you including me in the study. I’m amazed at how . . . wonderful it is for me to just talk about this stuff. I don’t know the last time, if ever, that I went through my chronology and my musical career. . . . ‘Cause, you know, there’s not going to be a lot of people who are going to spend an hour and a half listening to me talking about my songwriting process.

Gregory said, “Thank you for accepting me into your study.” Thea appreciated my study providing a vehicle for the voices of my participants to be heard:

I think what you’re doing is very valuable because it just brings another voice forward. . . . Allowing my voice to speak through your voice I think is very valuable . . . because I know I do that in my own personal work. I really honor the artists and the songwriters that I know and try to collaborate and promote and support and acknowledge them through my own networks as much as possible. . . . Oh my God, these are just, they’re saints and revolutionaries and hardly anybody knows of their work! (laughs) So thank you.

Curiosity. All participants (100%) expressed curiosity about why I was drawn to the topic and conducting the research. For example, JD asked, “I have a question for you. Why are you interested? Are you a songwriter yourself?” My impression was that they wanted to know about my background as a musician and a songwriter, something I typically reserved for after the conclusion of the interview, so as to focus primarily on the experience of my participants during the protocol questions. Six participants (50%) asked about the nature of the other participants. For example, Rita asked, “Are you talking to people who have had a lot of success?” Nine participants (75%) asked about when the research would be available for them to read and expressed curiosity about what the findings might be. Nick said, “I can’t wait to read about it!”

Responding with songs. It was striking, although perhaps not surprising, that all participants (100%) chose at times to respond to questions by offering one of their own songs. Sometimes, this took the form of talking about a specific song as a way to illustrate or explain a general point. At other times, participants drew directly on the lyrics of one of their songs to express themselves. Of the many excerpts related to this theme, I selected the following sample quotes to illustrate the ways in which participants called on their songs in the interview.

Russ pulled a line from a song to explain the challenge of being concise when writing lyrics:

The thing about a song is you’ve got to convey the feeling in about 4 minutes, you know. You have uh (pause) a line—“Things were beautiful when we were younger, first words, first steps, first physical hunger.” So you have to say things were beautiful because you learned to talk, you learned to walk, you discovered sex, you know—all those like base things, so I said it in like six words, that.

In response to a question about the themes of her songs, Jan chose to have a song speak for her:

I wish I could say that better. This song says it beautifully. For example, the name of the song is “Love Wins,” and I thought that was an odd title, because what are you fighting? . . . So the bridge of the song, which I wrote, goes, “When we’re up against too much to ask, when we lose our resistance at last, and we realize love’s got our back, love wins.

For everyone, great and small, we are lifted as we fall. Kindness conquers all. Love wins.”

I asked Dede about her composition process and she said, “I have a good example right now,” pulled out her phone, and began playing me segments of a song in progress. Hal also used his own repertoire liberally to explain things in the interview. When I asked him about the themes of his songs, he said:

For instance, people will often say to a person of my experiences, “Well, what was it like being a rock star?” Well there’s not a real simple answer to that, but I wrote a song called “Gallivantin” that starts like this.

Monica responded to my question about influences on her songwriting process in this way: “I have a song on this album called “Missing.” And when I was writing this song, I looked over and there was one of those—on a milk carton, the missing child—and the word came.”

Gaining insight. The experience of participating in the interview appears to have provoked new reflection and led to new ways of thinking about their songwriting for participants. Their reactions to some of my questions indicated that they found them novel, interesting, or requiring significant reflection to formulate a response, as the following quotes suggest:

Great questions, and it’s fun to talk about it! (Ariel)

I don’t know that I can answer that any better than that. It’s one of those open-ended kind of vague questions that you could say anything to. . . . It’s an ephemeral topic at best. (Hal)

Those were all really wonderful questions . . . and your questions were all so thoughtful. (Nick)

That’s a good question. (Don)

Another thing I’ve never thought of till now. So thank you. Those are good questions. (Rita)

It's a really hard question for me. (Monica)

Interesting question. (Dede)

Let's think about that. (JD)

It's funny you'd ask about it. (Russ)

I never really thought about that. (Don)

Participants commented spontaneously during the interview about the process or the experience, and ways in which the conversation had affected them. It appears that discussing the research topic with me led to new ways of thinking about their songwriting or themselves, or to being witnessed in a new way. Ariel said, "I feel like I went swimming out in the ocean (laughs) of my life and music and art." As noted earlier, Nick expressed pleasure in being able to explore the chronology of his musical development and suggested this was a first for him. It was unusual for Russ to talk so much about his music: "This is probably the most talking I've ever done (laughs)." Thea said, "I haven't thought about these things so it's interesting to have this conversation with you." Rita remarked, "It's interesting talking about it too because I've never really articulated it like that, but that's true." Nick said, "That's an interesting point that I hadn't sort of said it that way." Thea gained new insight about the song she had chosen to discuss in the interview, apparently as a result of transpersonal experiences of connecting with spirit:

And I'm just now getting this because I hadn't thought about it before [the interview]. Spirit just guided me to share that song. I contracted Chagas in Tucson 25 years ago, which is about the time I wrote this song. So it's kind of like I've been carrying this not knowing it all of these years, just like I've been carrying this song that has now emerged in a timely way as this information's also being made available to me. So it's like that other dimension that we were talking about.

This section has presented observations derived from the data about how the interview process affected participants. The significance of this will be taken up in chapter 6.

Creative Synthesis

The final step of the heuristic inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990) is creative synthesis, as described in chapter 3. Moustakas (1990) defined the goal of this phase as “an original integration of the material that reflects the researcher’s intuition, imagination, and personal knowledge of meanings and essences of the experience” (p. 50). In this section, I offer my creative synthesis of the findings of my research, taking into account my own heuristic contribution to the process.

The research question for this study (see chapter 3) was concerned with how songwriters experience change and transformation as a result of their songwriting practice. I defined the terms change and transformation and discussed the distinction between them in chapter 1. In this summary, for brevity of expression, I will use the term transformation to include both terms, unless there is a clear need to differentiate between them. The results may not be generalized to all songwriters (further discussed in chapter 6). I have, however, chosen to use the term songwriters rather than participants in this section when discussing the findings—except where it was necessary for clarity to refer to participants—in order to reinforce the fact that this synthesis represents the experience of a group of songwriters. Themes from the analysis detailed above are referenced as appropriate.

Creating and sharing original songs affects songwriters in a variety of ways that may be considered transformative. There are two fundamental properties of the songwriting practice—Connecting and Communicating—that serve both as enabling mechanisms for (means) and as direct experiences (ends) of transformation in the lives of songwriters. It is a useful simplification to consider Connecting as a process element and Communicating as related to the content of the practice of songwriting. Through the process of Connecting and the

Communicating of their content, songwriters experience transformation. They also realize additional transformative experiences, as a result of Connecting and Communicating, expressed in the themes of Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference.

The practice of songwriting, like other expressive arts practices (Herman, 2013; Knill et al., 2005), offers an invitation to step into the transpersonal (see definition in chapter 1) and to connect with something beyond one's ego. Songwriters engage in the intersubjective field (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992) with cowriters (Connecting With Cowriters) and audiences (Connecting With Listeners). They connect with the music and spirit, often while composing songs (Connecting While Writing Solo). They cocreate (Ferrer, 2002; Jung, 1976; Nachmanovitch, 1990) in these various states of intersubjective Connecting. Songs may come fully formed to the songwriter, often described as the outcome of a spiritual connection to something beyond oneself offering a song as though for transcription. Some cocreative experiences involve transpersonal connection with influences not immediately present in the physical environment of the songwriter, such as other artists (Connecting With Other Artists) and people in the fabric of the songwriter's life, current and past (Connecting With People In One's Life). Cocreativity may take the form of transpersonal Connecting With Listeners, in which the collective engagement in the moment can lead to powerful peak experiences (Maslow, 1964). In fact, such spiritual or transpersonal experiences occur across all of the many forms of Connecting that are part of the songwriting practice. Ten of the 12 songwriters in my study saw a connection between songwriting and spirituality (Songwriting And Spirituality Are Connected). Two of them defined songwriting as their spiritual practice or religion.

How do experiences of Connecting change or transform the songwriter? Temporary shifts (changes) in emotional state may occur when he or she composes, listens to, or performs a

song (Connecting With Emotions). The cocreative and transpersonal experiences described above are temporary changes of state as the songwriter enters into Connecting with the music, cowriters, listeners, influences, and spirit. Whether these are transformative in terms of leading to a pervasive and persistent reorganization of the person's psyche (Braud et al., 2000) is unknown, although profound spiritual experiences might be expected to have a significant transformative impact on a person. Friendships and romantic partnerships deriving from Connecting With Cowriters were reported as persistent outcomes, and might well be transformative.

While Connecting is about a process of entering into a state of engagement with something beyond oneself, Communicating captures the faculty afforded songwriters for expressing content to others through the medium of song. Something about the nature of putting words to music opens up a new language for accessing and expressing aspects of the self not available through simple speech. Songwriters describe having a strong desire to share themselves with others (Sharing Self), and sharing themselves more deeply than they could otherwise because of the expressive capacity they find through song. For those who had difficulty in accessing their emotions as children, or whose family settings did not encourage emotional expression, songs have offered a vehicle for becoming aware of feelings and externalizing them (Expressing Feelings). Songwriters also have a strong motivation to communicate explicit content through their songs (Sending A Message), drawing awareness to contemporary social issues, advocating for a way of life, or sharing beliefs. Recordings permit the songwriter to extend him- or herself to a global audience, particularly with the advent of Internet-based mechanisms of distribution for music. Communicating transforms the songwriter

by supplying a new and persistently available language for self-expression, whether for Sharing Self, Sending A Message, or Expressing Feelings.

The themes and topics of songs vary widely (Song Thematic Content). Nine categories of song topics were defined in this study, based on participants' descriptions of songs they had written: Relationships, My Life And Growth, Inspiring Values, Nature, Social Issues, Comedy Songs, Children's Songs, Spirituality, and Miscellaneous (see Appendix I). At times, songwriters' religious or spiritual beliefs directly affected the topic or lyrics of a song (which would be categorized in the Spirituality song theme), as in songs exploring death and the afterlife. At others, the effect was present but led to the expression of a song themed within a different category, for example songs about Nature or Inspiring Values (such as peace and nonviolence). Participants had been asked to select a song for the interview that had had significant personal impact. The most prevalent song theme categories reflected in these selections (lyrics of which are included in Appendix B) were Relationships, Inspiring Values, and My Life And Growth, with 11 of the 12 being categorized under either Relationships or My Life And Growth. It appears that songs written from personal material led to profound experiences for the songwriter.

Three Song Thematic Qualities were commonly mentioned: Inspirational (positive or uplifting for listeners), Universal (applying generally to most listeners), and Emotional (reflecting emotions, such as loss, loneliness, regret, or guilt). Some songwriters' thematic content is broadly consistent over the course of their songwriting career (Song Theme Evolution), for example writing from everyday life or writing positive songs. Some songwriters experience an evolution in their thematic material, typically a movement away from songs offering catharsis in working through personal material to more inspirational songs. Song

content appears to mirror the songwriter's personal journey through life when examined chronologically: Personal development or spiritual growth tends to be reflected in the evolution of song thematic content.

Through the process of Connecting and the content shared through Communicating in the enactment of the songwriting practice, songwriters experience several additional, transformative outcomes: Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference. The first three of these affect the songwriter and focus on personal impact derived from songwriting, while the fourth offers transformative possibilities for both the songwriter and his or her listeners.

While it is not clear whether this experience is best categorized as episodic changes of state or pervasive transformation, songwriters derive enhanced Wellbeing from their practice, including benefits such as feeling good, reduced stress, feeling pure, comfort, and a capacity to calm or soothe themselves. Songwriting also results in Affirmation through validation of the songwriter's artistic authenticity and identity as a songwriter; providing recognition of his or her songwriting abilities, which leads to a sense of pride; and allowing him or her to feel understood. Participants' descriptions suggested that these are persistent experiences of transformation for the songwriter, reported retrospectively as having been present over extended periods of time, and transformative in terms of his or her self-concept.

A very significant way in which songwriters are persistently and pervasively transformed by the practice of creating and sharing their original songs is through Personal Growth. Songwriters experience their practice as healing or therapeutic (Healing), affording them the opportunity to process their life experience through song (Processing Experience) and reach new awareness about themselves or a new way of relating to the material in the song. Through Communicating personally challenging material in the language of song (Expressing Feelings,

Sharing Self, Song Thematic Content) and the Connecting experienced in the sharing of these songs with listeners, songwriters evolve and grow. They increase self-knowledge and make meaning of these experiences through the songwriting practice, allowing for integration of difficult experiences or emotions and reduction of the material's psychologically negative impact. They gain a sense of purpose or direction, move through obstacles, and find resolution. Songwriting also transforms through empowering the songwriter (Empowerment), manifesting in increased self-mastery, overcoming shyness, building confidence, and developing agency.

The final theme describing songwriters' transformative experience of creating and sharing their songs is that of Making A Difference. This theme was the most forcefully articulated by participants and appears to derive its strength of impact from the combination of offering oneself to others through song—with attendant personal transformative benefits as already discussed—and the awareness on the part of the songwriter of being in service and providing possibilities for change and transformation to others. Through the process of Connecting With Listeners and the offering of their content through Communicating, songwriters achieve a frequently stated motivation of Making A Difference in the lives of others and in the world through their music. Songwriters desire to share what they may have learned through their own life experience and personal or spiritual growth with others, or to exhort listeners to consider a current social issue or embrace values to better the planet (Sending A Message). They may wish to inspire, nourish, and uplift their audiences, or to help them to grow and transform. Some songwriters consider this calling equivalent to ministering to others. When songwriters learn of their song's impact through feedback from their listeners—and increasingly this is through receiving e-mail messages from around the world—they are deeply moved. They experience gratitude, validation, satisfaction, joy, and awe. These experiences are, again,

difficult to categorize in terms of the nature of their transformative impact on the songwriter. State-based, episodic change clearly occurs at the moment of receiving a communication about the impact of a songwriter's song on a listener. It may be that being validated as making a contribution to others in ways that feel important to the songwriter is transforming in a persistent and pervasive sense. This might occur from a single instance or from a cumulative experience of positive feedback. Sharing Self through song, offering one's uniqueness to others through the practice of songwriting, invites songwriter and listener alike into the intersubjective, transformative space. It confronts and challenges the perception of a split between self and other, opening the possibility of an I-Thou encounter, in which each touches the other, and all change.

To conclude this synthesis of the results, I include my experience and contribution to the dataset, from the perspective of my role as the researcher and my autobiographical connection to the topic of songwriting. My intuitive appreciation for the transformative impact of songwriting derived from processing difficult personal material through writing a song of my own and seeing how I had grown as a result of creating and sharing it with others. I presented my self-analysis with regard to the themes that had emerged from the participant data analysis in the section above on The Researcher's Experience, and situated my experience within the Personal Growth theme. As a result of the research, I have come to understand that while other songwriters experience Personal Growth through the creating and sharing of their songs as I have done, this is only one aspect of the transformative power of the practice, as revealed in the range of themes reported in the results.

Chapter 6: Discussion

In this research, I sought to understand the subjective experience of change in the lives of songwriters as a result of creating and sharing their original popular songs. I began with my own experience as a songwriter and deepened my exploration through a qualitative, heuristic inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990), interviewing 12 songwriters who also record and perform their own songs. Their generosity in sharing deeply personal experiences of their decades of songwriting and samples of their music allowed me to elaborate a rich and detailed description of how transformation occurs as a result of the songwriting practice. In presenting the results, I included many quotes to allow their voices to be heard, to give full depth to the themes I derived from our conversations, and to illustrate the variety of experience within the themes. Participants' demographics were very homogeneous; they were predominantly middle-aged, White, well-educated, and self-identified with religious or spiritual orientations divergent from the U. S. population as a whole.

The chapter begins with a review and discussion of the main findings of the study, situated in the context of the relevant literature. I next address the implications of the homogeneous demographic profile of participants and other limitations and delimitations of the research. Heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990) is by definition transformative for the researcher; I present my experience of transformation and my observations about possible transformative effects of engaging in the research process for participants in the third section of this chapter. I conclude with implications of the study and suggestions for future research.

Findings in the Context of the Literature

The research showed that songwriters experienced change and transformation in themselves and their lives through creating, recording, and performing original popular songs.

Utilizing the process of thematic content analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), I discovered six primary themes to explain how songwriters experience transformation as a result of their practice. Two foundational themes emerged from core properties of the songwriting practice that function as enabling mechanisms for other experiences of transformation and are directly transformative in their own right: Connecting (related to the process of songwriting) and Communicating (related to the content). Through Connecting and Communicating, songwriters also experience transformation in the form of Wellbeing, Affirmation, Personal Growth, and Making A Difference.

My findings strongly affirm the transformative experience reported in the expressive arts literature that stepping into the transpersonal realm of art (Herman, 2013) invites new possibilities to take shape through poesis (Knill et al., 2005), as the songwriter opens him- or herself up to the possibilities available in the unknown of the liminal state (Crowe, 2005; Dissanayake, 1992; McNiff, 2004; Turner, 1969). Through various ways of Connecting—(subthemes) While Writing Solo, With Cowriters, With People In One's Life, With Other Artists, or With Listeners—the songwriters in my study opened themselves to the transformative powers of art. Several directly expressed that the songwriting practice offered healing or therapeutic value (Personal Growth: Healing). The image (song) that manifests allows the songwriter to form new ideas or reorganize his or her experience in the encounter: Expressive arts therapy modalities facilitate the externalization of the client's experience, the creation of the artistic image, thus inviting transformation of distressing material and old patterns into new ways of understanding and being (Allen, 1995; F. A. Baker et al., 2008; Bella & Serlin, 2013; Crowe, 2005; Knill et al., 2005; Rotenberg, 1988).

My results bore out this literature. Songwriting gave my participants a new faculty for Communicating the content of their lives, and enabled them to access and express their experience in ways not available to them otherwise, particularly with regard to their emotions (Communicating: Expressing Feelings). “Another purpose of music is as a form of communication, particularly the expression of emotions” (Crowe, 2005, p. 79). Participants also described ways in which creating or sharing their songs led to a change in emotional state in the moment, captured in the Connecting With Emotions subtheme. These results confirm findings in two other subjective studies of the experience of songwriters. Barba’s (2005) Feelings theme bears some relation to my feelings-related subthemes. Her participants described changes in feeling states before and after writing a song, suggesting that they found songwriting a way to express their feelings and transform them. Sena-Martinez (2012) reported a theme of *Psycho-spiritual transformation through songwriting is related to an emotional or euphoric state of being*, which included a range of experience from beginning the process of writing in an emotional state to the experience of transforming emotions through writing. These authors’ themes seem to reflect a combination of Communicating: Expressing Feelings and Personal Growth: Processing Experience in my results. Sena-Martinez reported a subtheme of *Sharing these songs allows songwriters to revisit the original emotional state of song whether it was sad or happy*, describing the change in emotional state brought about by a particular song, which resonates strongly with Connecting With Emotions in my findings.

Participants were able to share themselves differently and more deeply through song (Communicating: Sharing Self). As Crowe (2005) put it, “Writing music is about expressing a person’s uniqueness and sharing that with others. . . . Composition is about self-expression at its most basic level” (p. 89). Their songs allowed participants to externalize and to process their

experience (Personal Growth: Processing Experience), to make meaning of painful material, sometimes with the feeling that the song itself knew more than they did and was able to communicate something to them. The songs they chose to discuss in the interview as having had significant personal impact (Communicating: Song Themes: Participants' Selected Songs) largely fell into the Relationships and My Life And Growth (Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Content) song topic categories. Working through personal material with song allowed them to overcome obstacles and reach new understanding. As McNiff (2004) put it, "Art heals by cultivating imagination with a trust that a revitalized spirit will treat its own disorders" (p. 104). For McNiff (2004):

Creativity and healing are manifestations of the same essential energy. In my practice I continually witness how both of these processes convert problems into affirmations of life; and when they are joined together, their effects are amplified. I have also observed how environments and groups have the power to activate creative energy in people. (p. 213)

This observation about the significance of groups in the experience of creativity naturally leads to a discussion of how my results relate to the literature on intersubjectivity and cocreativity.

Theories pertaining to intersubjectivity (Buber, 1996; Ferrer, 2002; Merleau-Ponty, 1968; Stolorow, 1993) suggest that experience is cocreated through reciprocal, relational engagement among subjectivities and the life force, the mystery, the muse, God, or spirit, in what is variously called the intersubjective field, the flesh, the chiasm, or participatory knowing. Research concerned with relational aspects of creativity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1996; May, 1975; Moustakas, 1977; Sawyer, 2003) integrates a view of intersubjective experience, although with varied definitions. The Connecting theme relates directly to intersubjectivity and cocreation. Sometimes such cocreative processes can lead to beyond-ego or transpersonal experiences, such as flow states (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990) or peak experiences (Maslow, 1964). Participants reported many examples of these, such as experiences described as spiritual, meditative, peak, or

flow, when Connecting While Writing Solo and when Connecting With Listeners during performance. Such experiences in performance lend credence to researchers' discussion of the function of *communitas* (Turner, 1969) in ritual or performance (Herman, 2013; Schechner, 2003) and the capacity it offers to transform all who participate. Grey (1998) wrote that "art is communion of one soul to another, offered through the symbolic language of form and content" (p. 19). Participants in my study spoke excitedly of their experience of reciprocity and mutual building of energy between themselves and their audience, with some describing this as a spiritual experience. In Grey's (1998) view:

Art is the transmission of states of being. Viewers appreciate art because they resonate with those states of being. No matter what state of being is expressed in a work of art, universal creative spirit is the prime mover behind all art media. (p. 79)

These experiences of deep connection between performers and listeners appear to validate Sawyer's (2003) group flow concept, although this was developed with regard to a group of performers. Professional musicians in the popular press described this phenomenon as well (Boyd, 1992).

However, as noted in Connecting With Listeners, not all performances have this quality, and participants lamented the challenges of occasionally performing to an unreceptive audience. Boal (2008) deconstructed the notion of a spectator as follows: "This spectator (spect-actor) is not only an object; he is a subject because he can also act on the actor—the spect-actor is the actor, he can guide him, change him. A spect-actor acting on the actor who acts" (p. 13). The spectator is thus instrumental in the aesthetic space (Boal, 2008) in which the art-making takes place. When this engagement is lacking, the quality of the experience is directly affected. This may also relate to the vulnerability reported by participants in Connecting With Listeners. Inviting others into performance opens the performer up to the actions of the spectator, in Boal's sense of the term, and demands trust and surrender from the songwriter to the unknown of the

experience of mutual acting and spect-acting in the aesthetic space. I contend that Boal's conceptualization offers one explanation for the Personal Growth: Processing Experience theme, in the sense that an actor and spectator may be one and the same person, thus creating the possibility of a transformative aesthetic space within the songwriter's psyche for the exploration of a topic through song.

A particular transpersonal experience reported in Connecting While Writing Solo, and widely echoed by the songwriters cited in the literature review from nonacademic sources (Boyd, 1992; Flanagan, 1986), was that of rare occurrences of receiving a song fully formed, as if from somewhere beyond the self. Knill et al. (2005) described this phenomenon:

Artists themselves . . . often speak of attending to or receiving the work. The work comes to me; I do not make it through a willful imposition of my idea upon the world. Certainly I may have an intention when I begin; but unless I am willing to let go of my initial idea, I cannot be open to what will arrive. Often, in fact, the work comes as a surprise; what I find is radically different from that which I sought. (p. 40)

Barba (2005) reported that some of her participants experienced connections between themselves and something beyond self in creating songs, in her theme Source: The Giver Of Song, as did Sena-Martinez (2012) in her subtheme 5A: *There is a sense of being a conduit or vessel, like being used by God or higher power to write songs*. Connecting While Cowriting also led to intersubjective experiences, some of which were described as transpersonal in the sense of a loss of boundaries of the self, although this was also rare and treasured when it occurred. Others were more mundane although still led to cocreation of songs.

Sawyer (2003) noted that the influences of others in creative performance can be synchronic (in real time) or diachronic (preceding the performance). May (1975) wrote, "One can never localize creativity as a *subjective* phenomenon . . . what occurs is always a process, a *doing*—specifically a process interrelating the person and his or her world" (p. 50).

Sociocultural researchers of creativity (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996) included in their

models the individuals in the field who were gatekeepers to a creative domain. The literature thus treats the ways in which creative expression may be influenced by those not physically present at the moment of inspiration. As was discussed in chapter 2, there are different underlying theories about how the moment of inspiration in the most widely used creative process model (Wallas, 1926) leads to formulation of a specific creative expression; these suggest different explanations for the influence of individuals not physically present. My research revealed two subthemes—Connecting With People In One’s Life and Connecting With Other Artists—which included diachronic influences of individuals not physically collocated with the writer at the time of creating the song. Participants described listening to and learning from other musicians and songwriters and knowing that their work was influenced and informed by those individuals (Connecting With Other Artists), sometimes through conscious invocation of a certain artist’s style during composition and sometimes unconsciously. One participant described an experience of being directly advised by other (deceased) composers as she wrote the significant song she brought to discuss in the interview. Connecting With People In One’s Life captured experiences ranging from choosing explicitly to write about an individual personally known to the songwriter to a general awareness that these individuals were indirectly influencing their process in some way difficult to pinpoint. Sociocultural models might view such influences as the field of experts within the domain of songwriting, the internalization of a domain, and the press of the larger social context (Amabile, 1996; Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). However, cocreative experiences with a felt connection to deceased individuals are less well addressed by such models, and seem better supported by the expressive arts literature regarding art-making as offering a way to connect with the transpersonal in the chaos of liminality (Crowe, 2005; Herman, 2013).

As a result of Connecting and Communicating, the songwriters in my study experienced other transformation. Participants noted enhanced Wellbeing from songwriting. This was reported in Sena-Martinez (2012) as “an enhancement of [the songwriter’s] quality of life” (p. 134). Participants were affirmed through the creation and sharing of their songs, in terms of their artistic authenticity and identity as a songwriter, and feeling understood (Affirmation). This might be contextualized in Amabile’s (1996) sociocultural model of creativity, in which the inclusion of the field of experts validates Big C creative contributions; however, her model was not concerned with the outcomes of such validation. In any event, defining who comprises the field for the evaluation of a popular song is a complex affair. It appears that my participants did not require specific individuals’ validation in order to experience Affirmation; however, the recognition of their musicianship by other musicians was noted as affirming. Affirmation was also corroborated by the literature on music therapy, with regard to sharing original songs with others (F. A. Baker, 2013; Grocke et al., 2009; Jones, 2005).

A subtheme in my findings related to Affirmation was Empowerment (Personal Growth: Empowerment), which captured participants’ experience of greater self-knowledge, personal strength, capacity, mastery, and ability to act in their daily lives, as a result of their songwriting practice. Baker et al. (2008) noted two treatment goals frequently cited by the 477 professional music therapists they surveyed that corroborate these themes: “a) experiencing [*sic*] mastery, develop self-confidence, enhance self-esteem; . . . c) develop a sense of self” (p. 105). Crowe (2005) addressed this as well:

Music engenders a sense of agency through awareness of our own possibilities of action, feeling of mastery, and increased social communication. Music fosters a sense of meaning in our lives through a flexible, coherent identity. (p. 301)

I did not review the literature on singing others’ works in chapter 2, given that my research question was explicitly focused on the experience of creating and performing original

songs. However, as the Affirmation and Personal Growth: Empowerment themes emerged from my analysis, I recalled the work of Kleinerman (2008), with whom I had taken a class in the Evolution of Being Through Singing at the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology. In a qualitative study of nine women—business leaders who were also amateur singers who had taken voice lessons for at least 3 years and gave solo vocal performances—Kleinerman sought to understand how participation in singing might foster leadership qualities. She did not provide details of her method, nor screening criteria for how she selected participants with regard to their professional leadership roles, but it appears that she applied some form of thematic content analysis based on interviews. She found that singing can be considered a transformative learning vehicle to assist in moving away from limiting perspectives of self and toward enhanced leadership qualities and self-efficacy. As a result of their singing, her participants reported increased creativity, flexibility, risk-taking, self-awareness, and confidence. Kleinerman noted additional leadership qualities enhanced by singing, including preparation, emotional connection, openness, discipline, persistence, communication, vision, and self-acceptance. Other literature with regard to the performative experience of singing might further illuminate my results with regard to Affirmation and Personal Growth: Empowerment.

The final theme in my findings—and the one which surfaced most forcefully from the data, both in terms of frequency and intensity of expression—was Making A Difference. Some participants expressed a conscious motivation to affect others with their music or make a global contribution, while others found themselves joyfully surprised by the impact their work had had on listeners. Receiving information about the impact of his or her song validated the songwriter both at the level of artistic expression and in terms of personal self-worth. They reported experiencing being deeply moved, often to tears, and feeling gratitude, comfort, reassurance, joy,

and great satisfaction. Another subtheme, Communicating: Sending A Message, was also relevant to the idea of having an explicit goal of offering something to listeners. This desire to be of service or to inspire others was referenced by Grey (1998):

Mission . . . refers to the inner calling to creatively serve our physically and spiritually depleted world. The artist can be a spiritual emissary working in any medium in any part of culture. Mission connotes personal, passionate commitment to something. Mission is applied vision. (pp. 24–25)

Some participants explicitly viewed their songwriting as ministry or intended to inspire others with positive energy or advocate for values such as peace and nonviolence (as referenced in Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Content and Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Qualities). Herman (2013) referenced art as a mechanism for transmitting something understood by the artist with regard to spirituality or transpersonal experience and deemed important to share with others: “Making and witnessing art allows one to experience the transpersonal and also allows the sharing of that experience with others so they too can understand” (Herman, 2013, p. 653); such art “leads to extraordinary experience and the recognition of greater human connection beyond individual and cultural constructs” (Herman, 2013, p. 660). She explained how artists function as facilitators of change and inspiration: “Art-makers and their works challenge established notions of what is possible to be and do, and inspire us to increase our capacities, embrace more inclusive paradigms, and invent new ways of living” (Herman, 2013, p. 652).

One of the ways in which songwriters achieved their goal of touching others was through songs that had universal appeal (Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Qualities). The songwriters in my study described certain qualities when I asked them about their catalog of songs. One quality—Universal—reflected songs in which personal material had relevance for others or where the writer explicitly intended to create a song with universally appealing content.

Such Universal songs foster increased *communitas* (Turner, 1969) when shared, reinforcing the transformative potential for all. McNiff (2004) referenced this idea of the way in which the artist's own material can become important for others:

I do not deny that a picture or dream is closely associated with the inner life of its maker or dreamer. They carry messages, entertain, guide, and sometimes caution. . . . I imagine artistic expressions as offspring, and like children they are related to but separate from their makers. (p. 90)

As Allen (1995) explained:

Patterns are universal. Besides the strictly personal level, there are image patterns that are shared by groups, cultures, and individuals who have had similar experiences. So images provide people with a means to communicate on a deep level with one another. (p. 198)

In some cases, such material may be archetypal, in the Jungian sense (Edinger, 1974), allowing for engagement with material from the collective unconscious, with transformative possibilities for the culture at large. Grey (1998) also spoke to considerations of universality and collective and cultural context for images:

The meaning of an artwork varies depending on who is considering it and how they are considering it. To the artist, the work may be a trace of any of many levels of the artist's own awareness. Once an artwork is created, it exists within the confines of particular material-world spatiotemporal and sociopolitical contexts. To its viewers, the artwork fulfills a variety of private and collective meanings. A comprehensive view of art will consider multiple truths that an art object comprises. (p. 104)

Because of my interest in psychospiritual transformation (as defined in chapter 1), I sought to understand whether participants saw any connection between songwriting and spirituality. The findings with regard to Connecting yielded abundant evidence of ways in which participants experienced the practice of songwriting as spiritual through their descriptions of experiences. All but 1 participant said that there was a connection between songwriting and spirituality when I asked about this directly. Two defined the connection so tightly as to describe songwriting as their religion or spiritual practice. (It is important to be aware that the use of

language to describe spiritual and religious experience varies greatly and so it is possible that those who did not formulate their thoughts in such explicit terms may, indeed, have held this view.) Allen (1995) said that because of the healing and self-knowledge she had derived from her art, “I consider making art my spiritual path” (p. xvi). She wrote, “It is a form of practice, through which, like any spiritual discipline, knowledge of ourselves can ripen into wisdom” (p. x). Participants’ song themes also reflected connections to spirituality (Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Content), both in terms of direct lyrical content and indirectly in inspiring them to write about topics such as peace. Grey (1998) seemed to validate this:

There are many types of art that may qualify as spiritual, only some of which use traditional sacred symbols. The power of spirit in the artist determines the power of spirit in the work of art, not just the subject matter portrayed in the work. (pp. 128–129)

Crowe (2005) wrote, “Creativity as spirit is about expressing what is unique about ourselves and making that uniqueness manifest in the world. Songwriting is an organized, structured way to do this” (p. 301). Nachmanovitch (1990) echoed this view: “The creative process is a spiritual path. This adventure is about us, about the deep self, the composer in all of us, about originality, meaning not that which is all new, but that which is fully and originally ourselves” (p. 13).

Following this detailed examination of the various themes in my findings with regard to the literature, it is informative to situate the results at a high level in the context of the definition of transpersonal experience, provided in chapter 1, and derived from Hartelius et al. (2007). As was discussed above, songwriters reported transpersonal experiences through Connecting, which might be categorized under Hartelius et al.’s theme TP-I: Beyond-Ego, transpersonal as content. Through Connecting and Communicating, participants engaged in embodied ways within their sociocultural milieu with cowriters and audiences, which appears to fit with TP-II: Pervading Personhood, or transpersonal as context. Finally, through Connecting and Communicating, participants also experienced transformation in the form of Affirmation, Wellbeing, Personal

Growth, and Making A Difference. These outcomes exemplify TP-III: Changing Humanity, or transpersonal as catalyst for transformation of self and society.

This discussion has noted many strong links between my findings and the existing literature in the areas of the transformative power of art and creativity research. In chapter 2, I also presented and reviewed two models of psychospiritual transformation and development (Ferrer, 2002; Washburn, 1995), drawn from the field of transpersonal theory, as another possible lens through which to consider the experiences of songwriters in my study. I now situate my findings within the context of this literature.

Ferrer's (2002, 2011) model of participatory philosophy constitutes spirituality as cocreated through participatory events. Ferrer (2011) defined spiritual cocreation in terms of three interrelated dimensions of participation: (a) intrapersonal cocreation, embodied within beings, or "spirit within" (p. 3); (b) interpersonal cocreation emerging from "cooperative relationships among human beings growing as peers" (p. 3), and thus relational, or "spirit between" (p. 3), and (c) transpersonal cocreation, "dynamic interaction between embodied human beings and the mystery" (p. 4), or "spirit beyond" (p. 4). Ferrer (2011) also noted that interpersonal cocreation might involve nonhuman entities, such as "natural powers, or archetypal forces that might be embedded in psyche, nature, or the cosmos" (p. 3). Spiritual power and truth in this model is validated through the extent to which individuals and cultures move toward selfless awareness and action.

As I reflected on the themes that had emerged from my analysis, I initially thought that they might be readily associated with the dimensions of spiritual cocreativity elaborated in the participatory philosophy model (Ferrer, 2002, 2011). The transformative experience of participants with regard to Making A Difference certainly fit with the validating principles for

assessing psychospiritual development as being a move away from egocentrism, dissociation, and negative eco–social–political impact (Ferrer, 2011). This was in line with the “extending” (Daniels, 2009, p. 95) nature of the Ferrer (2002) model. Connecting and Communicating, as the foundation stones of the songwriting practice, seemed likely to relate to the ways of participatory knowing experienced through Ferrer’s (2011) cocreative dimensions. However, as I began to diagram my ideas, I realized that the experiences described by participants were not readily categorizable. For example, some of the experiences described in Connecting With Listeners seemed to involve simultaneous, intersubjective connections between songwriter-musicians and audience members; the image of the song; and some sense of spirit or something beyond the self. Was this to be seen as a complex sum of a number of different cocreative events? Such an experience seemed to contain interpersonal cocreativity between the human beings, but beyond that, I had questions. How was the song or music itself to be regarded? Is the art and the image a “nonhuman intelligence” (Ferrer, 2011, p. 3) and thus more of an interpersonally cocreative entity? This seemed to defy the participants’ reported experience. Is art spirit beyond, in Ferrer’s (2011) terms? Since art is embodied in its expression, this seems difficult to understand. Was this, in fact, spirit within? Embodied events were, by definition, not transpersonal in the model. If spiritual connection is felt collectively by members in a shared group (*communitas*) experience, is this considered a simultaneous series of individual transpersonal cocreative events, or, if not, how is the collective nature of the spiritual event to be accounted for? Perhaps, since Ferrer intended the model to allow for pluralistic views of spiritual ultimates, these individual attendees’ experiences should be held as simultaneous transpersonal events. However, the descriptions of participants seemed to allude to something more directly shared, while still being beyond the selves of those attending. I concluded that, while the model clearly captured

important elements of intersubjective cocreative experience reported in my results, it was not clear whether it could fully account for the intersubjective experience of art-making. Additional research—for example, exploring the experience of members of the audience as well as the songwriter-musicians present at a performance event—might serve to further elucidate its applicability.

Washburn's (1995) triphasic, spiral model of transpersonal development, as discussed in chapter 2, offers a path for individual psychospiritual development, but was critiqued by Ferrer (2002) for being biased toward inner experience and insufficiently encompassing of intersubjective experiences of growth. Indeed, this model failed to offer explanatory power for the results of my study in terms of the centrality to participants' transformation of intersubjective, cocreative experiences, such as described in *Connecting With Cowriters*, *Connecting With Listeners*, *Connecting With People In One's Life*, and *Making A Difference*. It was, however, very interesting to consider the model in light of the reported evolution of some of my participants' song themes (*Communicating: Song Themes: Song Theme Evolution*). Psychospiritual development occurs in the Washburn model through the individual's spiral path from a preegoic relationship between the Dynamic Ground—"energy, power, spirit" (Washburn, 1995, p. 4)—and the ego to a transegoic one. Those individuals who reach the transegoic stage typically do so by passing through a difficult process of "dying to the world" (Washburn, 1995, p. 172) and dissolving repressive mechanisms, followed by spiritual reawakening, as the ego reconnects with the Dynamic Ground. In the transegoic stage, the Dynamic Ground becomes a source of "higher life rather than a dark and threatening submerged realm" (Washburn, 1995, p. 152). Several participants in my study reported an evolution in their songs' thematic content from a focus on personal material and catharsis to an expression of their spirituality and intent to

inspire others. While it was not clear that in all cases this transformation was tied directly to the practice of songwriting, one person explicitly reported writing a song that felt like a spiritual awakening and led to a radical change in his songwriting expression and goals toward more spiritually inspired content. This would seem to reflect the kind of process described in the Washburn model. It may be that those who are expressing more spiritually inspired content in their songs (Communicating: Song Themes: Song Thematic Content) are tapping into the “wellspring of higher life” (Washburn, 1995, p. 152) of the unconscious in its transegoic state. Grey (1998) appeared to be reflecting a similar perspective:

There are developmental stages to the spectrum of consciousness, and art can come from any of these stages. As a person matures, consciousness unfolds in a sequence, from lower to higher, from the primal survival feelings to the concepts of the ego self and on to the sociocentric or possibly worldcentric self. (pp. 218–219)

The Washburn (1995) model integrates Jungian (Jung, 1969) depth psychology in the egoic phase of development, focused on identifying and dismantling dysfunctional psychological defense mechanisms. My research found that songwriters experienced Affirmation and Personal Growth as a result of their practice, with a number of benefits related to ego development, including greater sense of self, self-mastery, confidence, and agency. In summary, it appears that the songwriters in my study have undergone psychospiritual transformation as defined by the Washburn model as a result of their songwriting practice, although the full extent of their experience could not be accounted for, due to the model’s weakness in considering intersubjective developmental experiences. It is interesting to note, in light of the review of these models, that McNiff (2004) took issue with applying psychological theories to the transformative experience of art-making: “Psychological ideas and theories with their developmental narratives have not always been effective in describing how healing takes place through artistic activity” (p. 211).

The most surprising finding to emerge from this study came to light early on as I began interviewing participants. Based on my understanding of the topic from my autobiographical point of entry at the start of the heuristic inquiry process (Moustakas, 1990), I had created a research question that envisaged songwriting changing the songwriter in some way. My own experience was that I had grown as a result of expressing a difficult experience through creating and sharing a song (Personal Growth: Processing Experience); it seemed like a fairly discrete process, albeit extending over a few months. It quickly became apparent, as I spoke with the songwriters in my study, that many did not see songwriting and life as separate nor change as discrete. To say that one was changed by songwriting somehow set songwriting outside the self. Did songwriters write the songs, or did the songs write them? As Jung (2006) wrote:

Whenever the creative force predominates, human life is ruled and moulded by the unconscious as against the active will, and the conscious ego is swept along on a subterranean current. . . . The work in process becomes the poet's fate and determines his psychic development. It is not Goethe who creates *Faust*, but *Faust* which creates Goethe. (p. 174)

My question began to look less well-fitting with regard to the real-life experiences of songwriters, who had difficulty in isolating transformation as clearly as I might have hoped when I conceptualized the research, precisely because their experience of the practice was not made up of cleanly bounded, discrete, transformative events. Songwriting seemed integral to their very being and way of life, not something affecting them from the outside. Songwriting and living were synonymous. As quoted above, McNiff (2004) drew no distinction between creativity and healing. Nachmanovitch (1990) described the continuous process of transformation through creativity: "There is no ultimate breakthrough; what we find in the development of a creative life is an open-ended series of provisional breakthroughs. In this journey there is no endpoint, because it is the journey into the soul" (p. 11). Sena-Martinez (2012) noted that "the nature of psycho-spiritual transformation presented itself as a process that is not limited to one specific

moment but rather, [*sic*] as an ongoing process” (p. 146).

Another, related, paradox emerged. While the question of transformation—as I had defined it in chapter 1, as being persistent, profound, and pervasive—could only be answered with difficulty by participants, by considering the long arc of their lived experience of intertwining of self and songwriting, changes of short duration were easy to pinpoint. Thus, Connecting With Emotions; the vulnerability, at times, of Connecting With Listeners; and specific instances of feedback leading to the profound gratification derived from Making A Difference were easily reported. This led to another perplexing question. In chapter 1, I had attempted to separate the notion of change (as episodic, temporary, state-like) and transformation (long-lasting, trait-like) in my definitions, with the hope of being able to distinguish between the two in analyzing the results. Yet, upon reflection, it was not clear that this was possible. Was a transpersonal experience of receiving a song fully formed when Connecting While Writing Solo a temporary change of state or an event that led to transformation or both? More detailed interview questions and a more complex or nuanced framework for assessing transformation—one tends to think of the false dichotomy of particle and wave theory in physics—would have been required to tease this apart. Perhaps this is not even a useful endeavor if songwriters view the living of their practice as continuous and transformative when assessed retrospectively.

With these further questions that cut to the heart of what it is to express oneself in the world through song left pending, I conclude this discussion of my research findings in the context of the literature. The next section evaluates the ways in which conscious decisions and uncontrollable factors affected the study’s execution and the applicability of its findings.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations are shortcomings or conditions beyond the researcher's control that influence the research and affect the procedures or the interpretation of the conclusions. As discussed in chapter 4, the recruitment process resulted in a sample with limited demographic diversity. All participants lived in the United States with two thirds in northern California. Three quarters were aged 50 and over, and 10 of the 12 identified as White. Three quarters of the sample participants reported household income above the median for U. S. households and an equal percentage had college degrees. Despite efforts to recruit through channels likely to reach a broader demographic range, such as social networking Web sites, recruiting through personal networking was more effective at yielding participants, as described in chapter 3, and the project timeline precluded prolonging the recruiting process. This purposive sampling approach apparently led to demographics mirroring my own, as a White woman over 50 living in northern California. This sample is clearly not representative of the broader population of songwriters writing lyrics in English and living anywhere in the world, which was the targeted population for the study. Only 2 of the 12 participants identified an affiliation with a mainstream religion but all espoused some form of spirituality, a profile strongly divergent from the U. S. population as a whole (The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, 2008). Based on the interviews, several participants appeared to have an explicit commitment to a positive outlook in life and to inspiring others with these values—often linked with their spirituality—which may have led to the strong reporting of a desire to serve or minister to others as reflected in the Making A Difference theme. This invites a question as to whether “shock performers” or those with a less positive or spiritual orientation to life hold similar perspectives about their motivations for songwriting. My participants may have reported more transpersonal experiences or made

stronger links between songwriting and spirituality based on their spiritual orientation. In addition, participants used quite varying language to describe their experience, which may have limited the ability to compare codes or synthesize themes. While I did not specify any selection criteria related to professional musicianship, participants in the sample had a variety of professional experience as musicians (see chapter 4). It is possible that songwriter-musicians who rely upon their songwriting and performing as their primary source of income may have different experiences from those who do not, and this was not controlled for nor explored.

The heuristic inquiry method (Moustakas, 1990) focuses on deepening the researcher's autobiographical connection to a topic, and is not intended to be generalizable. However, it is possible that the findings might have varied considerably with a broader demographic profile in the sample. The sample included 12 participants, which was in line with Moustakas's (1990) recommendation of 10 to 15 participants for a heuristic inquiry study. A larger sample would have been desirable to enhance credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of the findings, through broadening the range of possible data for analysis. More variation in the dataset might have included either more experiences contradicting the core assumption of transformation or more nuance in confirming the themes reported here.

Another limitation was time. According to the method's originator, heuristic inquiry is "not one that can be hurried or timed by the clock or calendar" (Moustakas, 1990, p. 14). However, the practicalities of conducting research within a degree program meant that, at times, I could have imagined taking more time for a given step than was available, particularly within data analysis. Nonetheless, I am confident that the process and findings of this research are congruent with the standards of heuristic inquiry.

Delimitations are choices made by the researcher that define the scope and conduct of the

research, thus establishing boundaries about what will be studied and how. I made a qualitative study of the subjective experience of the transformative effects of songwriting on the songwriter. By focusing on a qualitative method, I was able to obtain rich, detailed descriptions of songwriters' experiences through participants' self-disclosure. This approach relied on retrospective reflection and was thus subject to quality of recall, a known factor in my research design. I believe that this was a positive aspect of the study, since the passing of time may have permitted some form of meaning-making to occur and may have made it easier for participants to integrate and articulate the larger themes of their experience over their lifetime of songwriting. Although many songwriters, including my participants, collaborate with other musicians and perform in bands or groups, I chose to focus my research question on the individual songwriter's experience, with the hope that results might inspire further research to explore group dynamics of songwriting and transformation. Time was itself a delimitation of the study. I imposed a schedule and timeline for each phase of the research, as well as a limit to the length of the interviews.

I defined my population of songwriters as lyricists (and, optionally, composers of the music) of popular songs. My definition of popular music was given in chapter 1. As such, I excluded songwriters who create popular music without lyrics, composers of classical songs, and those who cowrite but contribute only the melody or harmonic structure of the song. I made this choice because my own experience and my heuristic process of arriving at the research question led me to believe that the songwriter's self-expression through lyrics and the choice of song topic and content were important aspects of the transformative process of songwriting. This was borne out by the research, with the Communication and Personal Growth themes indicating the significance of the songwriter's ability to express him- or herself through the sharing of personal

material. Participants' explanations in the interview about how their chosen song had had a significant personal impact on them further reinforced the fact that the song topic and lyrics were integral to their experience. Chapter 3 detailed other inclusion and exclusion criteria used to select participants. My study was confined to adults over 21 writing lyrics in English, and with a certain depth of experience in songwriting productivity, recording, and performing. As such, I excluded the experience of children from my study or those with lesser experience in the practice of songwriting. However, when participants spoke about their development as musicians and songwriters, they shared insights about their childhoods, and gave some indications about how the practice had affected them before they were adult. There were no geographic limitations placed on the choice of participants. However, adequate mastery of English (as judged by me during screening) was another criterion for acceptance. As such, I did not research the experience of immigrants in the United States or citizens of other countries for whom spoken English was not a well-developed competency. This may have limited the cultural diversity of the study. Having reviewed the limitations and delimitations of the study, I now describe how the conduct of the research was in itself transformative for me and my participants.

Transformation

Anderson and Braud (2011) described the ways in which transpersonal research methods “invite transformation of self and others” (p. 1), using the definition of transformation as change that is pervasive, persistent, and profound that I adopted for this study (see chapter 1). Such personal transformation may include “increased self-awareness, enhanced psycho-spiritual growth and development, and other personal changes of great consequence to the individuals involved” (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. xvi). The authors explained that certain conditions must be in place for this to occur:

Personal and communal transformation can be an accompaniment or outcome of research if (a) the research *project* has great personal meaning and is one in which the researcher can become intimately involved, (b) the chosen research *approach* is an expansive and inclusive one that allows the researcher to engage in a greater variety of ways of knowing than usually is the case, and (c) the researcher more fully prepares herself or himself . . . for the project at hand. (Anderson & Braud, 2011, p. xvi)

Preparation refers to the cultivation of “*transpersonal, complementary, holistic, or integral* skills” (p. 162). They listed a large number of such skills, including direct knowing, intuition, empathic identification, tacit knowing, incubation, and play and the creative arts.

Although the heuristic inquiry method (Moustakas, 1990) predated the transpersonal research methods discussed by Anderson and Braud (2011)—and, indeed, seems to have been an inspiration for the development of Anderson’s (2011) transpersonal, intuitive inquiry method—it clearly has much in common with them. Heuristic inquiry invites the researcher to follow the seed of curiosity to learn more about a phenomenon of which he or she has personal experience, to illuminate a question that “has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one’s self and the world in which one lives” (Moustakas, 1990, p. 15). Emphasizing and honoring tacit knowing and intuition, the researcher immerses him- or herself deeply in the question, optionally engaging with coresearchers or participants to assist in expanding the learning. Thus, heuristic inquiry meets conditions (a) and (b) above, with its genesis in the researcher’s autobiographical connection to the research question and its specification of some of the very skills itemized in Anderson and Braud’s list as integral to the approach. If the researcher is well prepared to engage these skills and/or employ others on the list, heuristic inquiry would seem to have the same transformative potential as the transpersonal research methods mentioned. Moustakas (1990) believed this to be the case, saying that the researcher may expect “to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every heuristic journey” (p. 14).

I believe this research process has been transformative for me and my participants. For me, there were two notable aspects of transformation. First, I was transformed in situating and understanding myself as a songwriter as a result of expanding my inquiry beyond my own experience. I developed great humility about my limited experience of songwriting when compared with the decades of songwriting practice my participants so generously discussed with me. As I interviewed them and analyzed the transcripts, it became clear to me that the autobiographical starting point for my interest in the topic, which was grounded in the personal growth I had undergone through songwriting, was indeed shared by others (as borne out by the Personal Growth theme). However, I learned that this was a limited view of the capacity of songwriting to effect change in the songwriter and his or her life when situated in the context of all the themes that emerged from this study. For example, the Making A Difference theme was not strongly reflected in my experience (I did not receive feedback from a listener that my song had made a significant impact in his or her life) and yet this was hugely important for all of my participants. It may be that those who are called to write songs from an early age have a conscious or unconscious sense of connection to a mission to serve through their art, or perhaps this develops as the effect of their songs on others becomes clearer. All the songs I have written to date fit within the Relationships or My Life And Growth categories. Perhaps songwriters who started much earlier in their lives than I have broadened the content of their songs beyond the processing of personal experience to offer something more explicit in the way of a message about social issues or a desire to inspire or lift up their audience (as discussed in Song Theme Evolution). These realizations suggest ideas for future research, to be taken up shortly.

The second area of transformation came from experiencing myself as an academic researcher for the first time. The process of focusing on a topic of interest and continuing to

narrow it to a research question was very challenging for me and at various steps along the way I found myself stymied by the scale of the endeavor or the difficulty of gaining sufficient clarity to proceed to the next phase of the project. I employed many of the transpersonal skills listed by Anderson and Braud (2011), particularly quieting and slowing (meditation, contemplative trailrunning in nature), auditory skills (sonic meditation in nature), visualization and imagination (guided visualization, shamanic journeying), intuition, and the creative arts (drawing, painting, dancing, improvising musically, playing by ear on the piano to a random selection of music as I was synthesizing codes into themes). I learned that I could trust these skills and transpersonal ways of accessing self and knowing to understand my present experience and to inform me. Sometimes this required a giant leap of faith. Over time, I developed more fluidity at moving between these ways of being and experiencing. As I look back to the start of the journey, I can now affirm myself as capable of embracing and even welcoming the sense of overwhelm and not knowing that seems to be an inherent part of large-scale research initiatives, and feel proud and joyful at arriving safely at the conclusion of this study with a stronger sense of self, both as a songwriter and a researcher.

In chapter 5, I presented the results of thematic analysis of the comments made by participants during their interviews that had struck me as indicative of how the experience of participation might be affecting them. The four themes that emerged were Appreciation, Curiosity, Responding With Songs, and Gaining Insight. While I have not asked participants about the experience of participation nor validated these impressions with them, I believe that participating in the study was transformative in the following ways. Participants expressed deep Appreciation for the opportunity to talk freely and at length about their songwriting experience, to have their voice be heard, and to feel affirmed (Affirmation) by being witnessed by me as

songwriters. This seemed to offer them a way to Gain Insight into how their practice had affected them, to integrate their understanding of their journey, or even to derive new meanings or awareness from songs they had chosen to bring in to discuss. I felt that by entering into the intersubjective field of the interview setting, something new emerged from our engagement, illuminating their experience for them in novel ways. Responding With Songs allowed participants to demonstrate (I believe unconsciously) the way in which songwriting afforded them another means or language for Communicating. Their Curiosity seemed rooted in an interest in Connecting with other songwriters. While my thematic analysis of the data directly related to the research question led to themes of Connecting With Cowriters and Connecting With Listeners, the process of participation itself appeared to speak to a more general sense of connection with the larger community of musicians and songwriters actively practicing their art. As such, they were curious about me and about whom else I was including in the study. This experience of Affirmation and Curiosity led to a feeling of warmth and Connecting between us, which, I suspect, may result in ongoing friendships.

Implications and Future Research

In the final section of this chapter, I discuss implications of the study and ideas for future research. The therapeutic value of songwriting as a clinical intervention has been well documented (Austin, 2001; F. A. Baker et al., 2008; Bruscia, 1998b; Cordobés, 1997; Dingle et al., 2008; Ficken, 1976; Grocke et al., 2009; Rotenberg, 1988). As was discussed in the review of the literature, the research on the subjective experience of transformation in songwriters in nonclinical populations is sparse. This study has added to the literature in this area, confirming some of the findings of Barba (2005) and Sena-Martinez (2012), and suggesting that some of the benefits in clinical populations may also accrue to nonclinical practitioners of songwriting. In

particular, as a result of their songwriting practice, participants in the study were able to access and express their feelings (Communicating: Expressing Feelings) and share themselves more fully with others (Communicating: Sharing Self); work through painful psychological obstacles and make meaning of their experience (Personal Growth: Processing Experience); enhance their sense of self, gain confidence, and experience greater self-mastery and agency (Personal Growth: Empowerment); enhance Wellbeing; and affirm themselves (Affirmation) through sharing their music and Making A Difference in the lives of others.

This suggests that offering songwriting interventions (in the form of workshops or classes, for example) to nonclinical populations might allow for some of these transformative benefits. However, it is important to note that those in my study were lifelong practitioners of songwriting with high levels of musical ability from childhood. Thus, their experience may not be available to those less musically talented. That said, if the focus of the endeavor is concerned less with the aesthetics of the product (the song) and more with the process and experience of songwriting, which is commensurate with the approach of expressive arts therapies (Rubin, 2005), there may still be much value to such offerings. Indeed, Ariel, a participant in the study, expressed her view that everyone should have the experience of creating a song:

I just think that everyone should try to write a song [laughs]! Whether or not they even think they have a voice to sing with . . . Of course I'm biased because this is a comfortable area for me, but I really truly feel like it's a great thing for each person to experience just one time, taking something that's meaningful to them and making it into a song. . . . I think that it is a contribution to getting to know ourselves and . . . a way to be connected to the essence of who we are. And it's another great reflective tool.

Another implication of the study, derived from the Communicating: Expressing Feelings theme, is the possibilities that might be afforded to children for self-expression through access to programs offering songwriting in schools or extracurricular settings. Songwriters in the study reported that, particularly as children, writing songs allowed them access to a different kind of

language for accessing and expressing their feelings; it seems plausible that making songwriting available to children more widely might assist young people in developing greater competency in self-expression and facilitate externalizing painful experiences. Additional research regarding what makes songwriting so effective for accessing emotion might aid in the design of both nonclinical and clinical programs.

The analysis of the thematic content of participants' selected songs for the interview suggested that writing about personal material, such as Relationships and My Life And Growth, led to significant experiences for the songwriter, often through Personal Growth: Processing Experience. This invites the question of how individuals close to the songwriter might be affected by such songs. What is the experience of the listener, when the song is addressed to him or her, or when that person is referenced in the lyrics or participated in or was directly affected by the experience represented in the song? It is possible that a study of such situations might reveal Personal Growth themes for the listeners and a more personal form of Making A Difference for the songwriter, when the listener is known to him or her.

The findings suggest many other avenues for further exploration of the subjective experience of songwriting. As was discussed in chapter 4, the participants in my study expressed their musical ability and began learning instruments and writing songs very early in their lives. In addition, Song Theme Evolution showed that a number of participants had experienced a change over the course of their songwriting career from writing songs with cathartic value through processing personal experience to writing songs inspired by their own spiritual evolution and intended to uplift others. It would be interesting to study the developmental path of songwriters to deepen exploration of this topic and learn whether it is a generalizable finding that song themes accompany and reflect developmental experience through the lifetime.

Several other questions occur in relationship to this avenue of inquiry. For example, as discussed in chapter 4 in The Dance With Professionalism theme, writing songs with the goal of “making it” in the commercial music industry appears to place different constraints on the songwriter. I had no explicit criteria regarding professionalism in my selection process. It would be interesting to compare the experience of songwriters who have achieved commercial success in the music industry with those who have chosen to prioritize other goals for their songwriting. Another question with regard to the longitudinal experience over the songwriter’s lifetime concerns Making A Difference. It would be interesting to know whether this motivation is stimulated by the experience of enacting a songwriting practice and receiving feedback about one’s songs and whether this is intrinsic to songwriters from an early age. How do songwriters experience the desire to make a difference? When do they first have an awareness of this? Is this a conscious sense of mission or calling? How does that change over the lifetime? In addition, since my participants were uniformly writing songs as children, it would be informative to understand more about the experience of songwriters who begin their practice later in life, and to further study the variable productivity over the lifetime reported by my participants, to see how this affects songwriting thematic content and experience.

Although several participants described ways in which they employed electronic media to facilitate songwriting, the majority of our conversations about cowriting experience concerned face-to-face collaboration. It would be instructive to study whether experiences reported in Connecting With Cowriters are also present in electronic collaboration—which can occur either in real time over Skype and other Internet-based videoconferencing systems or asynchronously through file sharing and Cloud-based tools—and to understand how else this shift in technology may be affecting the subjective experience of cowriting.

This study was exploratory in nature, with a sample of just 12 songwriters. In order to understand more about the questions raised above with regard to whether pervasive transformation and episodic change are distinct experiences for the songwriter—or even relevant differentiations—it would be informative to expand this qualitative study to include a larger and more demographically heterogeneous sample and develop a more nuanced set of questions to explore how songwriters conceptualize and define transformation.

A final possibility for future research concerns the impact of instrumental compositions. As was discussed in the section on limitations and delimitations, I chose to exclude composers of music without lyrics or those who were not lyricists in a cowriting relationship. This was because I was curious about how the opportunity to express him- or herself verbally through song lyrics might affect the songwriter. It may be that the transformative impact of the practice as reported here is not contingent upon lyrical expression. A study comparing the experience of composers of lyrical songs and nonlyrical compositions with regard to transformative impact would illuminate this further. Indeed, Dissanayake (1992) took issue with the content of art, saying that “just as all symbols are not art, neither is all art symbolic” (p. 91), and suggesting that the focus on the cognitive aspects of symbol is a prolongation of the Cartesian mind–body split with its devaluation of noncognitive ways of knowing. She suggested that “it is a matter of being rather than representing” (p. 90) when making art that is at the heart of its value as a practice. If she is correct, then the focus on lyrics as a symbolic expression of the self may be overrated.

Conclusion

This study has explored the subjective experience of songwriters with regard to the transformative effects of creating, recording, and performing original popular songs. Through heuristic inquiry (Moustakas, 1990), I have situated my own experience within the context of a

much more experienced group of fellow songwriters. I have learned that the Personal Growth and Affirmation I experienced through the practice are shared by others, but that there is a richness of transformative outcomes available to songwriters far beyond my initial assumptions. In particular, songwriting offers the possibility of delightful cocreative connections and profound transpersonal experiences, as well as a capacity to express and realize a deep sense of purpose through touching others' lives with song. Just as my participants and I evolved by engaging with one another in the heuristic inquiry process, when songwriter and listeners enter into the transpersonal, liminal space created through the sharing of song, all are transformed.

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Appendix A: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The interviewer will welcome the participant, review confidentiality and informed consent issues (in a lot of detail if the participant has opted not to use a pseudonym), explain the purpose of audiotaping, and set expectations about how the interview will be conducted and its likely duration of 60–120 minutes. Any questions by the participant about these issues will be addressed before proceeding.

The following questions will be asked or covered in the flow of conversation. Not all subquestions are likely to be asked explicitly, but these are included to remind the interviewer about the topics to cover. As is typical in a semi-structured protocol, other, related questions may be asked as follow-ups, depending on the participant's responses.

Begin:

I have prepared a series of questions to ask you. Some may seem more relevant to you than others, and that's fine, so please speak as much or as little about each one as you choose to. There are no right answers; my only goal is to learn about your experience. If you don't want to answer a question just let me know. We will revisit your choice to use a pseudonym or not at the end of the interview, in case anything about the experience causes you to want to modify your choice.

1. **How did you first get interested in being a musician and songwriter, and how did that develop over your life?**
 - a. (if needed as prompt) What were early influences and when did you start making music or writing songs? What different kinds of songwriting, music-making, and performing have you engaged in over your life?
 - b. What are your primary musical and songwriting activities currently?
 - c. How do you describe yourself to others with regard to your musical activities?
2. **How would you describe your songwriting process?**
 - a. What inspires you to write songs?
 - b. How do you determine what to write about and how do you write the lyrics?
 - c. What have been some of the themes of your songs?
 - i. Have these varied over time?
 - d. What conditions or factors support or detract from your songwriting process?
 - e. In what ways, if any, do you employ substances, such as alcohol or drugs, as part of your songwriting process?
 - f. How do you relate recording and performing to the songwriting process?

3. **In what ways, if any, are other people involved in or do others influence your songwriting process and experience?**
 - a. How has this affected you?
 - b. If you play your songs with a band or group, what role does your band play in writing the songs?
 - c. How would you describe the relationships amongst members of your band?
 - i. How does this affect the songwriting process?
 - ii. How does it affect you?

4. **Do religious or spiritual beliefs or practices contribute to or affect your songwriting process?** If yes:
 - a. Please describe these beliefs or practices.
 - b. How has this affected your songwriting process?
 - c. Do you see a connection between songwriting and spirituality?

5. **Please describe how you record songs.**
 - a. How do you choose which songs to record?
 - b. What is your purpose for recording songs?
 - c. What is your experience of recording?
 - d. How do you share your recordings?

6. **How has writing and sharing your songs affected you personally?** (may prompt for psychological, spiritual, etc.)
 - a. What has changed in you?
 - i. What about songwriting caused this change?
 - b. What has changed in your life?
 - i. What about songwriting caused this change?
 - c. How has the response to your recordings affected you?
 - d. How has performing your songs affected you?
 - i. How does this differ from performing “covered” songs?
 - e. Thinking about songwriting over the course of your life, what kind of relationship have you had with songwriting at different points in your life?

7. **Let’s listen to the specific song you provided.** (Pause to listen. After the playback, ask ...)
 - a. Why did you choose this song to share?
 - b. Can you tell me about how you wrote it?
 - c. What was your experience of the first public performance of this song?
 - i. What has been the experience of performing this song over time?
 - d. What was your experience of sharing the recording of the song?

- e. Has the song itself changed over time, and, if so, how?
- f. How has writing this song affected you?
- g. If the song was cowritten, what was your experience of that?

In concluding, the interviewer will tell the participant that the interview is coming to a close and ask if s/he has anything else s/he wishes to share or has any questions. The interviewer will review the choice of use of a pseudonym or not and allow the participant to change his or her election and amend the informed consent form, if needed. The interviewer will thank the participant for his/her time and contribution to the research, and make sure that the participant is aware that there may be two follow-up contacts. Contact information for reaching the researcher, her Chair, or the chair of the Research Ethics Committee will also be reviewed, should the participant have any questions after concluding the interview.

Appendix B: Lyrics of Participants' Selected Songs**Rita Abrams: Mill Valley**

© 1970 Mill Valley Music

I'm gonna talk about a place
That's got a hold on me,
Mill Valley
A little place where life
Feels very fine and free,
Mill Valley
Where people aren't afraid to smile
And stop and talk with you awhile,
And you can be as friendly
As you want to be.
Mill Valley!
Talkin' 'bout Mill Valley,
That's my home!
It looks as pretty in the rain
As in the sun,
Mill Valley
And there's a mountain
That belongs to ev'ry one,
Mill Valley
And there are creeks
That run on endlessly,
And trees as far as you can see
It makes you feel as if
Your life has just begun.
Mill Valley
Talkin' 'bout Mill Valley,
Talkin' 'bout Mill Valley, California,
That's my home!
I know that there may come a time
I'll have to leave Mill Valley,
And ev'ry memory
Will seem like make-believe
Mill Valley
And all the good things
That are mine right now,
Will call to me and ask me how

I could have left them all behind
How could I leave Mill Valley,
Talkin' 'bout Mill Valley,
Talkin' 'bout Mill Valley, California,
That's my home!

Don Caruth: If It Ain't One Thing, It's Another

© 2001 Don Caruth

If it ain't one thing
It's always another
No matter what you say or do
Shit happens to people like me and you
One day you're up
And the next day you're down
I know, baby, 'cause I been around
If it ain't one thing
Hey babe, it's always another
It's always another

Trials and tribulations
They're a part of life
You better learn how to do it
Or you won't survive
Pick up the pieces
Get on with the show
Easy come, baby, and easy go
It if ain't one thing
If it ain't one thing
It's always another
It's always another

If it ain't one thing
It's always another
No matter what you say or do
Shit happens to people like me and you
One day you're up
And the next day you're down
I know, baby, 'cause I been around
If it ain't one thing
Hey baby, it's always another
It's always another

If it ain't one thing
It's always another
If it ain't one thing
It's always another

What is it now?
I can't believe this . . .

Nick Gallant: Joyous And Free

©2013 Gallant Brothers Music

Let it all go
Let it all slide
There's a finite number of days that you're alive
Someday you're gonna die
Let your heart
Be your guide
If it makes you sing out loud or start to cry
You might give it a try

Let me tell you what I've learned
That all these things that burn in my insides
They are nothing to hide

All my ghosts and apologies
Please slide off my shoulders in this breeze
I can't re write the time

And when the sunset tumbles down
I hope that I'll be found,
On the ground
Joyous and free

And through all this wandering in the wilderness
I hope I can find some love for me
And be
Joyous and free
Joyous and free
Joyous and free
Joyous and free
Joyous and free

Jan Garrett: I Dreamed Of Rain

©2003 Foolchild Music (ASCAP)

1) I dreamed of rain, and the rains came

Soft and easy, sweet and clear

I dreamed of rain, and the rains came, and peace spread over the land

2) I dreamed of summer, and the winds changed

And the green was easy, and the rivers ran clear

I dreamed of summer, and the winds changed, and peace spread over the land

And the flowers bloom in the desert,

And the air is fresh and clear

I dreamed of rain, and the rains came, and peace spread over the land

3) I dreamed of freedom, and the moon rose

And the way was easy, and the path was clear

I dreamed of freedom, and the moon rose, and peace spread over the land

And the guardian stars are shining

And the night is bright and clear

I dreamed of freedom, and the moon rose, and peace spread over the land

4) I dreamed of heaven, and the earth sang

And the sound was easy, and the song was clear

I dreamed of heaven, and the earth sang, and peace spread over the land

And the ancient pain is forgotten

And the father's debts are clear

I dreamed of heaven, and the earth sang, and peace spread over the land

5) I dreamed of rain, etc.

Gregory Irish: Why Did You Do It, Why Don't You Care?

© Words & Music by Gregory W Irish 07-05-2011

Somewhere in the dead of the night, you drove your kids into the lake.
What gave you the right, how many lives did you take?
Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

Why did you have to take her life, and then you took your own.
Instead of killing her, you should have just taken your own.
Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

When you went to work today, did you plan to kill?
Your co-workers didn't deserve this, and now time stands still.
Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

When you went to Columbine today, did you plan on bringing a gun?
When you shot all of those people, was it just for fun?
Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

Hate is a terrible thing, it eats you up inside.
Love is just the opposite, but when the two collide
You have to remain strong, or maybe even subdued.
Whatever you do, remember your friends. Don't get lost in your solitude.

When you set out to attack my son, did you intend to make him dead?
When you grabbed that piece of wood, and hit him in the head.
Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

Spoken: Please join me in the fight against violence, hate and bullying. It is senseless and it is unnecessary. Try love and compassion for a change. It just makes life so much more bearable.

Why did you do it, why don't you care? Why did you do it, why don't you care?

Dede Kittenhead: Derby Girl

© 2012 Kittenhead

whipping round track breakneck speed
she's a demon - all you need
with one look you'll know the score
life with her is never a bore
she's a little heartbreaker
tattooed, helmet, skater
thrill a minute, take a whirl
she's my sexy derby girl
after party won no doubt
scrapes and bruises beyond count
and she has her team's back
sisterhood on and off the track
she's a little heartbreaker
tattooed, helmet, skater
thrill a minute, take a whirl
she's my sexy derby girl
jammer with the helmet star
in the pack good so far
passing one two then four
taps her hips then she'll score
she's a little heartbreaker
tattooed, helmet, skater
thrill a minute, take a whirl
she's my sexy derby girl
heartbreaker
skater
whirl
she's my sexy derby girl!

Russ Leal: Tomorrow

© 2001 LealMusic

You talk and talk and talk 'bout how it used to be
How everything was better, so much harmony
Didn't have the stuff that pushes us around
Make us live our lives with our noses to the ground
Almost like it's useless to try to get it right
Cause all you act today is bitch and moan and fight
Pardon me, you see that life is unrehearsed
What's done is done we've had our fun; it's time to step up to the mic and holler.

Only thing we know for sure- tomorrow
Only place where love is pure- tomorrow
It's a place where love can grow- tomorrow
Fundamental piece of the master plan- tomorrow

Things were beautiful when we were younger
First words, first steps, first love, first physical hunger
And things don't always go the way that you wish they would
But if you had no bad you'd never recognize the good.
Everyday the sun moves from east to west
Little orphan Annie, she was the one who said it best she said
The sun is gonna come up tomorrow
And if you don't mind, the joy I find, I'm gonna spread love around the corner.

It's our only piece of clay- tomorrow
Put it on the wheel and throw a better day- tomorrow
Give it all the love you got- tomorrow
Load up your love gun and give it a shot- tomorrow

Yeah you gotta look ahead
Don't even think about it
Sure, celebrate the times you've had
But we'll only make it if you
Understand.

What Scarlett said was all too true- tomorrow
Is a better day for me and you- tomorrow
It's a place where love will grow- tomorrow
Are you gonna win, or place or show? - tomorrow

Cause it's really all we've got- tomorrow
And it could be cold or hot- tomorrow
Do you think I ask a lot? - tomorrow
You see I'm thinking maybe not- tomorrow
Tomorrow tomorrow tomorrow tomorrow

JD Martin: Red Rock Canyon (We Go On)

© 2005 Foolchild Music (ASCAP), Gill 'n' Goldie Music (ASCAP)

Red rock canyon loves the light, juniper pinon sunrise
 And the sweet earth is still damp from last night's rain
 The smell of the sage is a simple prayer rising up in the morning air
 Saying.....welcome home again.

And oh, what a wonder, I cannot begin to say
 Such unspeakable beauty calling my name

We go on, like a beautiful song
 We are carried on great winds across the sky
 We go on, we go sailing free
 We come shining through, we go on

There are secrets singing in the breeze at dawn, a fresh.....familiar song
 And everywhere I look, the world is alive
 The soul of the river is one and the same as the holy blood running through my veins
 Like a father's smile in his newborn child

So, stand still, let me look at your face
 Everything keeps changing, but this love remains

We go on, like a beautiful song
 We are carried on great winds across the sky
 We go on, we go sailing free
 We come shining through, we go on

And oh, what a wonder, I cannot begin to say
 Such unspeakable beauty calling my name

We go on, like a beautiful song
 We are carried on great winds across the sky
 We go on, we go sailing free
 We come shining through, we go on
 Like a beautiful song.....
 We go on

Monica Pasqual: Drive Away

© 1996 Monica Pasqual

Take this broken hat
Throw it in the wind
Please do not look back
Or pick it up again
It has lost its shape
And I have given up
I don't have what it takes
To fix our broken love

Take your splintered words
They never were that true
Take them far away, as far away as you
Take that old blue car
It's just a piece of junk
Roll up your sleeping bag
And throw it in the trunk

Drive away
My angry tears
Drive away
Your voice in my ears
Drive away
Out of my sight
Just drive and drive

Take this broken cup
Toss it in the yard
Many times it's cut
But now I'm on my guard
Love was once brand new
Now it's feeling old
Cracked and broken down
Lying in the cold

Drive away
My angry tears
Drive away
Your voice in my ears

Drive away
Out of my sight
Just drive and drive

Take this tarnished ring
Do with it what you like
It has lost its shine
It has lost its might
Take it far away
Because I have given up
I don't have what it takes
To fix our broken love

Drive away
My angry tears
Drive away
Your voice in my ears
Drive away
Out of my sight
Just drive and drive

Drive away
Four long years
Drive away
The smoke and the mirrors
Drive away
Right out of sight
Just drive and drive
Just drive and drive
Just drive and drive

Thea Summer Deer: Take The Walls Down

© 2007 Thea Summer Deer

Take the light from my heart love
Take the thought from my mind
Give me peace and show me a sign
Take the walls down tonight

When the walls fall around us
there'll be thunder in the night
meet me down at the border
my friend, let the healing begin

You've cried so many tears
been waiting all these years
it's been cold in the dark
Take the light from my heart my
friend and we'll make a new start

We're a world wanting freedom
and our freedom is inside
Give me peace and show me a sign
Take the walls down tonight

Ariel Thiermann: Dance With Me

© 2005 Ariel Thiermann and Linda Arnold

Put down your weapons tonight
I refuse to fight
war with war
and fear with fear
I need you now with me
Can we talk about our boundaries
the walls we build in our love
Can we talk about what we're scared of

Dance with me
what have you got to lose
I'm willing to open my heart and be real
so why not choose
to dance with me, dance with me
Why not take a chance with me

Your silence is giving you away
I know you've got so much to say
Behind the pain and the pride
isn't it love that's burning inside

Dance with me
what have you got to lose
I'm willing to open my heart and be real
so why not choose
to dance with me
dance with me
Why not take a chance with me

Imagine this
dancing with what we resist
Imagine this
balancing in endlessness

I'm reaching out my hand
Let's take it slow tonight
to the rhythm of surrender
Then we both win this fight

Dance with me
what have you got to lose
I'm willing to open my heart and be real
so why not choose
to dance with me
dance with me
Why not take a chance with me

Hal Wagenet: Galileo

©1971 Hal Wagenet

A man sat on his roof and looked at the stars.

Soon he could see a truth in the stars and he thought, "I'd like to tell everybody."

So he went to the village and said to the people, "Look! See what I've found."

(Quasi-military interlude)

But no one listened, so he went back to his house, and sat on the roof, and looked at the stars.

After a while he was still there, and the stars were still there, and he thought, "The truth is still there, and I'd still like to share it."

So he went back to the village, but this time, he tried a gentler way...

Appendix C: Recruitment Flyer

**Do you write songs
with lyrics?**

**Do you record and
perform your songs
for the public?**

**If you'd like to be part of a doctoral
research project investigating the
experience of songwriting, please
contact**

Hilary Beech at xxx@xxx.com

*** This will take
about 2 hours
of your time**



Appendix D: Demographic Questionnaire

Your real name and contact information (items C1–C4) is only for the researcher’s use and will be held strictly confidential, per the guidelines in the Informed Consent Form, so that you may not be identified in connection with this research. Your identity cannot be protected if you choose not to use a pseudonym. Other information from this questionnaire may be published in the dissertation or in journal articles.

Name

- SCR1 What is your age?
- SCR2 Do you identify as both a songwriter *and* as a musician/performer/recording artist?
- SCR3 Do you write lyrics for your songs, and are they in English?
- SCR4 Do you write music and melody too?
- SCR5 Do you write your songs with others?
- SCR6 How many songs have you written in the last 2 years?
- SCR7 Are you willing to provide a recording and lyrics for one of your original songs?
- SCR8 Is the credit for this song shared with anyone else?
- SCR9 Do you play your songs as part of a musical group?
- SCR10 Has this group had its current membership for at least 2 years?
- SCR11 How would you describe the primary musical genre of your most recent songs?
- SCR12 Does your songwriting primarily consist of creating new work by mixing sampled sounds and others’ music?
- SCR13 Does your songwriting primarily consist of creating songs for theatre/film where someone else writes the script?
- SCR14 Do you write songs primarily for individual or community spiritual practices?
- SCR15 Do you record some of your original songs?
- SCR16 Do you distribute these recordings to people beyond the artists involved in creating the recording?
- SCR17 Do you perform your songs live?

- SCR18 How many performances per year do you give? (in the last 1–2 years)
- SCR19 For how many years have you been performing?
- SCR20 How large is your average audience? (in the last 1–2 years)
- SCR21 Are you currently being treated for active schizophrenia or a mental health disorder with psychotic features?
- SCR22 Are you willing to meet in person in the Bay Area or over Skype or another Internet-based videoconferencing service?
- SCR21 English skills (privately assessed by screener)
- D1 Gender
- D2 Occupation
- D3 Religion or spiritual orientation
- D4 Ethnicity
- D5 Highest education completed
- D6 Relationship status
- D7 Parent1 occupation
- D8 Parent2 occupation
- D9 Childhood place of residence
- D10 Income range
- D11 Instruments played (include vocals)
- D12 Number of years writing songs
- D13 OK for researcher to attend recording sessions?
- D14 OK for researcher to attend performances?
- D15 Prefer pseudonym?
- C1 Phone number
- C2 Best time to call

C3 E-mail address

C4 Address

Appendix E: Informed Consent Form

To: Research Study Participant

From: Hilary Beech, Primary Researcher

You are invited to participate in a research study which is being conducted to fulfill the dissertation requirement for my Doctor of Philosophy degree at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology), 1069 East Meadow Circle, Palo Alto, CA 94303. The topic of the study is the subjective experience of composing, recording, and performing original popular songs. Your participation will support scientific research in better understanding how such an experience may affect a person's life, and may contribute to your own understanding of the impact your particular experience has had in your life.

Your participation will entail being interviewed for 1 to 2 hours, at a neutral site to be mutually determined by you and me and at which confidentiality may be maintained. Interviews may also be conducted by telephone or Skype, depending on your geographic location, and any costs incurred in this case will be paid by me, and in such a manner as to ensure confidentiality. The interview will be audiotaped and the recording will be transcribed by me. If a transcription service is used, the transcriber will be required to sign a confidentiality agreement, a copy of which is attached to this form for your review and information. You will be required to be available for two possible follow-up contacts. The first would be conducted by telephone for up to 30 minutes. The second would be by telephone or e-mail and take no more than 10 minutes of your time. Any costs for these telephone conversations will be borne by me. These follow-ups will take place at my discretion and may not be required. Quotes, themes, and patterns which emerge from your interview may be included and published in my doctoral dissertation, and in subsequent reports of the findings in scholarly journals or popular publications. I will also ask you to supply the lyrics and a recording of one of your original songs, and to grant me permission to quote from the lyrics in these publications as well. If the lyrics of the song you provide were cowritten, I will ask you to obtain signed permission from your cowriters to quote from the lyrics in my dissertation or subsequent publications deriving from this work. If you are willing, I would like to sit in on a recording session and/or attend a live performance of your songs or view a recording of a live performance you have given. This is optional. If you do offer me this opportunity, I would use it to assist me in putting our interview discussion in context and to learn more about your process of recording and performing.

To assure your privacy and the confidentiality of your interview responses, you will be given the opportunity to choose a pseudonym which will be used in the final research study. You may decline to do so, if you prefer to have your name (or stage name) used in the study. If you opt not to use a pseudonym, your privacy and confidentiality are no longer protected, so it is important to carefully consider whether you would prefer quotes from our interview and your song lyrics to be attributed to a pseudonym or to your real or stage name. If you choose to use your real or stage name, you have the right to refuse to answer any question asked in the

interview. Please write your chosen pseudonym on the space provided at the end of this form, if you so desire. All hardcopy material relating to your participation will be stored in a locked cabinet to which only I will have access. All electronic files will be stored on a computer which may only be accessed by a password-protected login known only to me.

Before signing this consent form and participating in the interview, please consider the possibility that discussing your personal life experience may bring up memories or uncomfortable feelings. If at any time you have concerns or questions during the course of the interview, I will make every effort to discuss them with you and inform you of various options to resolve your concerns. In addition, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or prejudice. You may request a written summary of the research findings by providing your mailing address below.

I can be reached at xxx-xxx-xxx or by e-mailing xxx@xxx.xxx. You may also contact the Co-Chairs of my dissertation committee with any concerns or questions you may have or to obtain additional information: Dr. Christine Brooks and Dr. Lisa Herman may be reached at Sofia University at 650-493-4430, or christine.brooks@sofia.edu or lisa.herman@sofia.edu. Dr. Frederic Luskin, who chairs the Research Ethics Committee at Sofia University, is also available to respond to your questions at 650-493-4430 or fred.luskin@sofia.edu.

I attest that I have read and understand this consent form. The researcher has explained the study to me and any questions I have about this research study and my participation have been answered to my satisfaction by the researcher. I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary and affirm that no pressure has been applied to encourage my participation. My signature indicates my willingness to participate in this research study and to have the results published.

Write pseudonym here: _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date

Please send me a written summary of the study's pertinent findings:

___ yes ___ no

Contact Information (Please Print):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Appendix F: Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement

I, (print name) _____, hereby agree to transcribe interviews conducted as part of a dissertation study by Hilary Beech (the researcher). As the transcriber for the interviews of this study of the subjective experience of songwriting, I recognize the confidential and personal nature of the interviews I will be transcribing, and I agree to maintain the confidentiality of the participants involved. I understand that the audio recordings and my original transcriptions will include the actual names of the interviewee and any individuals to whom they may refer during the interviews. I understand that maintaining participants' confidentiality is an ethical imperative and agree not to disclose to anybody other than Hilary Beech the names of participants or the content of the audio recordings that I transcribe. All information contained in these recordings will remain completely confidential. All materials submitted (audiotapes) and transcripts will be kept in a secure location while they are in my possession. All transcriptions will be shared between me and the researcher in such a way that only I and the researcher may hear the contents of the audiotapes and or view the content of the transcripts. During the time I have possession of the audio recordings I will not leave them unattended in a place where others may access them. I agree to keep only one copy of the transcription until the researcher has verified that she has made her own backup copy. After this time, I will destroy any copies I may have, electronic or otherwise. During transcription, in the unlikely event that it becomes clear to me that I know the person whose interview I am transcribing, I will report this immediately to the researcher, Hilary Beech, and will not transcribe that person's interview.

I, (print name) _____, understand and will comply with the above statements.

Transcriber's signature

Date

I, Hilary Beech, have discussed the transcription confidentiality requirements with the transcriber named above.

Researcher's Signature

Date

Appendix G: Cowriter Release Form

To: Cowriter(s) of song provided by research study participant

From: Hilary Beech, Primary Researcher

_____, with whom you cowrote the song entitled _____ has agreed to participate in a research study which is being conducted to fulfill the dissertation requirement for my Doctor of Philosophy degree at Sofia University (formerly the Institute of Transpersonal Psychology), 1069 East Meadow Circle, Palo Alto, CA 94303. The topic of the study is the subjective experience of composing, recording, and performing original popular songs.

As part of the research, I have asked each participant to provide the lyrics and a recording of one of his or her original songs, and to grant me permission to quote from the lyrics in my doctoral dissertation and any subsequent publications deriving from that work. Since you are a cowriter of the song, I also need your permission to use the lyrics in this way.

For purposes of the research, _____ opted to/not to (delete as appropriate) use a pseudonym. The use of a pseudonym protects the identity of the participant, since all quotes from and lyrics written by that person are attributed to the pseudonym in the dissertation or derivative works, rather than to the person's real (or stage) name. If one cowriter uses a pseudonym while another does not, then this may mean that the identity of the person using the pseudonym is no longer protected, since a reader may be able to deduce the other writers' names if one writer's real or stage name is known. Therefore, it is best if all writers make the same choice in this regard. Please write your chosen pseudonym on the space provided at the end of this form, if you so desire, after reflecting carefully and conferring with your cowriter(s) about this privacy issue.

I can be reached at xxx-xxx-xxxx or by e-mailing xxx@xxx.xxx. You may also contact the Co-Chairs of my dissertation committee with any concerns or questions you may have or to obtain additional information: Dr. Christine Brooks and Dr. Lisa Herman at Sofia University at 650-493-4430 or christine.brooks@sofia.edu or lisa.herman@sofia.edu. Dr. Frederic Luskin, who chairs the Research Ethics Committee at Sofia University, is also available to respond to your questions at 650-493-4430 or fred.luskin@sofia.edu.

I attest that I have read and understand this consent form. Any questions I have about this research study and the use of my cowritten lyrics have been answered to my satisfaction by the researcher. I understand that my consent is entirely voluntary and affirm that no pressure has been applied to encourage my consent. My signature indicates my willingness to have my lyrics used in this research study and to have the results published.

Write pseudonym here: _____

Cowriter's Signature: _____

Date

Researcher's Signature: _____

Date

Contact Information (Please Print):

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

Appendix H: Artistic Influences Mentioned by Participants

Genres	Contemporary Artists (20 th and 21 st century)	Classical Composers
Pop	Joni Mitchell	Bach
Rock	Carole King	Mozart
Rock and roll	Eva Cassidy	Debussy
Jazz	The Beatles	Ravel
Folk	Neil Young	Copland
World music	The Animals	
Hiphop	Dick Dale	
Soul	The Rolling Stones	
Motown	John Lennon	
Black gospel music	Guns N Roses	
British invasion	Simon and Garfunkel	
Country	The Monkees	
Punk	Betty Wright	
Classical	The Clash	
Big band	Boomtown Rats	
Music of 30s, 40s, 50s	James Taylor	
Surf guitar	Michael McDonald	
	Kingston Trio	
	The Weavers	
	Elvis	
	Joan Baez	
	Judy Collins	
	Crosbie Stills Nash and Young	
	Ella Fitzgerald	
	Bonnie Raitt	
	Suzanne Vega	
	Tracy Chapman	
	REM	
	Michael Jackson	
	Stevie Ray Vaughn	

Appendix I: Categorization of Song Themes

The following table shows examples of song topics discussed by participants in their interviews and coded in the analysis of the data, and how these were grouped into song theme categories.

Category	Example codes
Relationships	Love relationships and partners Searching for love Broken heart and breakups Nightclub come-ons My children My grandmothers My grandfather Sexuality
My Life And Growth	Career as musician Related to my process of individuation or personal growth Saying goodbye to reckless part of me Saying goodbye to myself before I became a father About my life Life's challenges Songs in chronological order tell my life story Rebirth Write from where I am My town Everyday life Resolution of grief, pain, destruction
Inspiring Values	Peace Harmony Nonviolence
Nature	Being outdoors Nature images Rivers, canyons, mountains
Social Issues	Homelessness Environmental issues Borders that limit freedom Women's empowerment Bullying Songs with social message

Children's Songs	Children's TV series and film scores
Comedy Songs	Funny vegan song Dealing with aging effects on the body
Spirituality	Searching for spiritual connection Devotional Posing questions about spirituality Informed by my spirituality Songs follow my spiritual development
Miscellaneous	Summertime The creative process Metaphor about life Healing