

THE IMPACT OF LYRIC CHOICES ON SPIRITUAL EDIFICATION

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ABSTRACT

Modern Christian worship music has gained influence within the evangelical community. The words of these songs, sung corporately, have the potential to influence the spiritual lives of church congregants, making it important for worship leaders and songwriters to identify the most beneficial lyrics. Despite numerous opinions about theological and personally relevant lyrics, little research has been conducted on the spiritual effects of lyric content within the lives of Christian believers. Diminutive scholarly inquiry has been limited to historical, theological or qualitative methodologies. Utilizing the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) and the Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI), this quantitative quasi-experimental study employed a pretest/posttest design to determine whether worship lyrics, in general, led to stronger perceptions of spiritual edification and if integrated lyrics led to stronger perceptions of spiritual edification than lyrics that are either emotionally- or theologically-driven. The study attempted to identify lyric choices that promoted strong personal perceptions of spiritual edification in a sample of 70 evangelical believers between the ages of 18-23 years of age who attended a large university in the Mid-Atlantic United States and were currently enrolled in an introductory worship course. The results showed a statistically significant difference in spiritual edification from pretest to posttest after exposure to worship lyrics in general. In addition, there was a significantly higher spiritual edification score in the integrated lyric group, as compared to the emotional lyric group. However, there was no significant difference between an integrated and theological lyric approach on posttest spiritual edification scores. The results suggested that the lyrics of worship songs may aid in promoting spiritual edification and that there is merit in integrating both relational and theological components.

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Table of Contents

Abstract.....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
List of Tables and Figures.....	vi
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	10
Statement of the Purpose.....	11
Significance of the Study.....	12
Research Questions.....	13
Hypotheses.....	14
Definition of Terms.....	15
Summary.....	18
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW.....	19
Introduction.....	19
Historical Studies.....	19
Theological Positions.....	22
Methods of Lyric Analysis.....	29
Lyric Analysis Studies.....	31
Spiritual Transcendence Studies.....	34
Music Studies.....	38
Spiritual Transcendence Index.....	45
Summary.....	49
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY.....	50
Introduction.....	50
Design.....	50
Research Questions and Hypotheses.....	50
Participants.....	51
Setting.....	52
Procedure.....	52
Data Analysis.....	57
CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.....	59
Introduction.....	59
Results.....	59
Summary.....	65
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION.....	67
Introduction.....	67
Summary of Findings.....	67

Limitations	70
Recommendations for Future Study	72
Implications for Practice	73
Conclusion	75
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 76
 APPENDICES	 83
Appendix A: IRB Approval Form	83
Appendix B: Red Tie Records Permission Letter	84
Appendix C: Lyric Approaches	85
Appendix D: STI Approval Letter	86
Appendix E: PANAS Approval Form	88

Tables

1. Sample Demographics	52
2. Lyric Groups	59
3. Descriptive Statistics.....	61
4. Preliminary ANCOVA Results.....	62
5. ANCOVA Results.....	64
6. Estimated Marginal Means	64
7. Post hoc Analyses Summary.....	65

Figures

1. Spiritual Transcendence Before and After Exposure to Worship Lyrics	60
2. Moderation Analysis.....	63
3. Post hoc Analyses Bar Chart.....	65

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Background of Modern Christian Worship Music

This chapter provides a background of modern Christian worship music (MCWM) and the importance of lyrics in the lives of Judeo-Christian believers. MCWM has become popular within the evangelical community and is swiftly becoming a standard of congregational worship.¹ An examination of the Christian Copyright Licensing International's (CCLI) "Top 25" song list² confirmed that evangelicals have gravitated towards this musical style, diverging away from contemporary Christian music and more traditionally based hymns. However, this genre of congregational music is still relatively new in the history of the church. In the late 1960s, "[t]he Hippie Movement provided fertile soil for the Holy Spirit to usher in the next great awakening, the Jesus Movement."³ The movement did not require a reform of the hippie dress or musical style, but rather focused on a repentance of sin associated with the lifestyle of this era. Whaley and Towns explained that "[t]he 'Jesus people' embraced Christ as Savior but did not abandon aspects of their subculture, including informal dress, rock music, casual speech, and simple living."⁴ Thus, Christian music was able to take on a more "rock 'n' roll" feel, with lyrics promoting "an intense personal relationship with Jesus Christ."⁵ This new style of music fostered a songwriting community, most notably out of Calvary Chapel in Costa Mesa, CA, in which

¹ Nelson Cowan. "Heaven and Earth Collide: Hillsong Music's Evolving Theological Emphases." *Pneuma* 39 (2017): 78.

² "CCLI Top 100." CCLI. Accessed June 1, 2018. <https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?List=top100>.

³ Whaley, Vernon M. *Worship Through the Ages*. (Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2012). ProQuest E-book Central, 213.

⁴ *Ibid*, 215.

⁵ "The alternative Jesus: Psychedelic Christ." *Time Magazine*, June 21, 1971.

believers would write “Jesus music,” centering on relationship and commitment to Christ.⁶ By retaining the popular music style of the day, the music from the Jesus Movement awakening expanded the listening audience, with mainstream radio stations playing Christian songs.⁷

With upbeat rhythms, melodies considered to be current in their style, and relationally-based lyrics, the Jesus Movement became the starting point for a multi-million dollar Christian music industry, a culturally inclusive tool for evangelism, and “an outlet for Jesus People to express deep emotions.”⁸ This growth gave way to a new genre of Christian music most commonly known as Contemporary Christian Music (CCM).⁹ CCM artists, such as Amy Grant, Keith Green, and Michael W. Smith were regularly heard on the radio, allowing Christian church services to adopt their folk-style “rock ‘n’ roll” for Sunday morning congregational singing.¹⁰

While the Jesus Movement’s lyrics were known for “how much substance of Christian worship they preserved in a new (musical) format,”¹¹ by the early ‘90s, CCM lyrical content was defined by the use of simple lyrics, use of singular pronouns, and a lack of detailed biblical narrative.¹² These songs were often labeled “happy clappies,” as they presented unrealistic, overly cheerful lyrics, without exploring a range of emotions nor a depth of theology. Songs such as “Shine Jesus Shine,” “God is Good,” and “Lord, I Lift Your Name on High” were utilized to promote joy within congregational singing, while largely ignoring other emotional

⁶ Whaley, 217.

⁷ Ibid, 231.

⁸ Ibid, 219, 230.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Matthew R. Sigler “Not Your Mother’s Contemporary Worship: Exploring CCLI’s “Top 25” List for changes in Evangelical Contemporary Worship.” *Worship*, vol. 87, 5 (2013): 449.

¹¹ Robb Redman, *The Great Worship Awakening: Singing a New Song in the Postmodern Church*. (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 2002), 53-54.

¹² Sigler, 451.

responses, such as lament and sorrow.¹³ As these new choruses were not a part of traditional hymnals, church leaders printed song sheets for congregants and eventually began projecting lyrics on screens.¹⁴ This change provided more freedom for the congregation to engage in physical worship, such as the lifting of hands,¹⁵ though it resulted in a loss of an established set of songs within the church.¹⁶

Simultaneously, the early Hillsong Movement placed great emphasis on positive messages “filled with a winning victorious attitude.”¹⁷ The church’s cathartic lyrics sparked controversy among evangelicals, as their worship music was deemed too emotionally charged, while lacking theological substance.¹⁸ In critiquing the early ‘90s phase of Hillsong worship, Riches and Wagner noted, “[f]ew Hillsong songs teach doctrine; most emphasize this individual conversion experience.”¹⁹ These denunciations aided in lyrical changes of future Hillsong worship and CCM as a whole.²⁰

By the 2000s, criticisms of CCM pressed musicians and songwriters to develop another Christian genre, Modern Christian Worship Music (MCWM). The musical styling of MCWM was different than that of CCM, as it was characterized by an updated style of rock, as opposed

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Frank Page & Lavon Gray. *Hungry for Worship: Challenges and Solutions for Today's Church*. (Birmingham: New Hope, 2014), 127.

¹⁵ Bob Kauflin. “Screens or Hymnals.” *Worship Matters*. Accessed on August 30, 2018. <https://worshipmatters.com/2006/02/03/hymnals-or-screens/>.

¹⁶ Page and Gray, 127.

¹⁷ Gerardo Marti. “The Global Phenomenon of Hillsong Church: An Initial Assessment.” *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review* (2017): 382.

¹⁸ Ibid, 378.

¹⁹ Tanya Riches & Tom Wagner. “The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into global brand. *Australian Journal of Communication*, 39 (2012): 26.

²⁰ Marti, 378.

to the softer-rock qualities of CCM.²¹ MCWM also differed from CCM as its lyrical focus shifted from simple lyrics of cheerfulness to songs that spoke of God’s glory and songs that exemplified worship through lament.²² Matt Redman’s “Blessed Be Your Name” demonstrated the shift from “happy clappy” to a full range of emotions within worship.²³ The Hillsong movement also shifted with, “[a] new emphasis on the presence of God in human suffering, [appearing] in response to voices from outside the denomination.”²⁴

Similar to the expanding listening groups of the Jesus Movement, the MCWM of today has reached an unprecedented number of audiences. MCWM is currently the fastest growing genre of the Christian Music industry.²⁵ This advancement is due to the rapidity in which songs can now be dispersed, via internet sites such as iTunes, Spotify, Facebook, and YouTube, as well as the establishment of global church models, in which multisite churches participate in worship via satellite and streaming services. Prior to the internet, churches learned of new congregational songs through word of mouth or by attending conferences and purchasing songbooks. Presently, a CCLI study revealed that the primary way for discovering new church music is through the internet.²⁶ Taking into account the popularity of the genre and the instant gratification of discovering new music, it would be logical to assume that new MCWM must be written at a swift pace in order to meet a growing demand. Further, this demand has led to the establishment of comprehensive worship models, for which churches can, “[Create] an atmosphere of

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid, 452-453.

²³ Sigler, 455.

²⁴ Riches & Wagner, 26.

²⁵ Monique Marie Ingalls. “Awesome in this Place: Sound, Space, and Identify in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship.” (Doctoral Thesis, University of Pennsylvania), 385.

²⁶ Sigler, 455.

immersive contemporary worship [and find] resonance with people almost everywhere by dovetailing into the larger currents of church goers who warmly acquiesce to the Pentecostalization or Charismatization of worship occurring across the world.”²⁷ Citing an example of one global worship model, Marti explained:

Many sub-Hillsong churches now across the world follow the pattern set by their primary exemplar: they riff on evangelical–Pentecostal liturgical structures, eschew denominational sponsorship or approval, localize their newly institutionalized meanings of church, appeal to the individualized needs of disconnected urbanites, advertise themselves with contemporary fonts and graphic-design logos, and use any available meeting space with the capacity for amplified sound, projected images, and sufficient accessibility. Doing church in a Hillsong way becomes learning how to mobilize and produce affect in a particular manner, one that is viewed as distinctly cosmopolitan, further affirming a trans-national bond among their network of churches.

By developing an easily replicated worship model, churches were able to rapidly expand their influence within church models and more specifically with freshly written MCWM songs.

As the technological landscape of the 21st century has advanced, MCWM has become globally-minded. Using the internet, songwriters are able to address a worldwide audience, rather than local church culture alone.²⁸ Perhaps the leading example of the globalization of MCWM is that of Hillsong Music. Of their songs, Cowan noted a shift, “from the local church level to a self-replicating global community.”²⁹ Corroborating this transition, Hillsong reported an estimated 50 million people sing their music in over 60 languages.³⁰ As their audience is not limited to a single church or denomination, Hillsong’s lyrics are often criticized for utilizing a generalized theology, mixed with hyper-personalism, so as to appeal to larger markets.³¹

²⁷ Marti, 383.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Cowan, 78.

³⁰ Hillsong Media. “Fact Sheet.” Accessed August 19, 2018. <https://hillsong.com/fact-sheet/>.

³¹ Cowan, 79.

Hillsong could be considered one of the first worship groups seeking to reach a more universal audience. However, many MCWM collectives such as Elevation Worship, Vertical Church Band, and Bethel Music are seeking to reach a global congregation as well.

The Impact of Music and Lyrics

Much research has been conducted on the relationship of music with thoughts, emotions, and wellbeing. A 2018 study of intentional music use found that using music as an intervention tool decreased psychological distress.³² In a study on emotional modulation, Gebhardt, Dammann, and Loescher found that music aided cognitive problem solving and positive stimulation within daily function.³³ Corroborating this research, Van Goethem and Sloboda's 2011 study indicated that music aided in emotion regulation by providing opportunities for introspection, while serving as a distraction and coping device. Additionally, music has been related to holistic health. Moss's study found that singing music aided in overcoming difficult circumstances and strengthened spiritual wellbeing.³⁴

Musical lyrics also have an impact on the listener's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. In a study on the behavioral effects of musical lyrics, Barongan and Hall found that misogynous music facilitated aggressive behavior, indicating that lyrics could subconsciously influence actions.³⁵ Confirming the link between lyrics and conduct, Bohm, Ruth, and Schramm found that

³² Katrina Skewes McFerran, Cherry Hense, Asami Koike, & Debra Rickwood. "Intentional Music use to Reduce Psychological Distress in Adolescents Accessing Primary Mental Health Care." *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry* 23, no. 4 (2018): 567.

³³ Stefan Gebhardt, Ilka Dammann, Klaus Loescher, Peter M. Wehmeier, Helmut Vedder, & Richard von Georgi. "The Effects of Music Therapy on the Interaction of the Self and emotions—An Interim Analysis." *Complementary Therapies in Medicine*, 41, (2018): 61.

³⁴ Hilary Moss. "Music Therapy, Spirituality and Transcendence." *Nordic Journal of Music Therapy* (2018): 1-12.

³⁵ Christy Barongan & Nagayama Hall. "The Influence of Misogynous Rap Music on Sexual Aggression Against Women." *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19 (1995): 195-207.

listening to prosocial lyrics reduced aggressive actions as well as aggressive thoughts.³⁶ Thus, there is evidence that lyrics sway cognition. In addition to the impact of lyrics on behavior and thoughts, a study by Fiveash and Luck indicated that happy and sad lyrics can elicit a corresponding emotion or mood as the listener takes in the words.³⁷ Focusing on a holistic view of personage, Ransom's study noted the benefits of listening to "meaning-filled" lyrics, or lyrics that aid in discovering one's life purpose, as they increase overall wellbeing, suggesting, "[y]ou can increase wellbeing by mindfully listening to meaning-filled lyrics bolstered by music's ability to influence emotion."³⁸

Lyrics also have an impact on the spiritual life. The Bible noted the teaching power of music, explaining the purpose of, "[l]etting all things be done for building up"³⁹ in the Christian faith. The Psalms also encouraged the catharsis of emotive release through song, offering transcendence through remembering the attributes and works of God.⁴⁰ These scriptures suggested that music provides an impact on the lives of those who engage with the content. As believers are called to grow in Christ-likeness, Psalms, hymns and songs from the Spirit provide admonishment and wisdom,⁴¹ instruction and revelation,⁴² moments of meditation and

³⁶ Tamara Böhm, Nicolas Ruth, & Holger Schramm. "Count on Me" – The Influence of Music with Prosocial Lyrics on Cognitive and Affective Aggression." *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind, and Brain*, vol. 26, 3 (2016): 279-283.

³⁷ Fiveash, Anna & Geoff Luck. "Effects of Musical Valence on the Cognitive Processing of Lyrics." *Psychology of Music*, vol. 44, 6 (2016): 1346.

³⁸ Patricia Ransom. "Message in the Music: Do Lyrics Influence Wellbeing?" (Master's Thesis, University of Pennsylvania, 2015).

³⁹ 1 Cor. 14:26

⁴⁰ Ps. 42:6

⁴¹ Col. 3:16

⁴² 1 Cor. 14:26

reflection,⁴³ and assurances of help and provision,⁴⁴ aiding the unity and maturity in the body of Christ.

Historically, the Christian community implemented the use of song for teaching and spiritual transcendent purposes. Page noted, “[f]rom the beginning, Christians have used the hymn form to express their faith in their own worship. Great hymn writers saw hymns as original, personal expressions of faith.”⁴⁵ Reformation leader Martin Luther believed musical worship to be of high importance for communication with God and the teaching of doctrine.⁴⁶ Nearly 300 years after Luther’s assertions, the Sunday School movement utilized the teaching properties of the Christian song for use in, “meetings, private or personal devotions, and as part of individual and family gatherings.”⁴⁷ The early 20th century brought about the Azusa Street Revival, which highlighted the transcending and emotional edification of music lyrics in the Spirit.⁴⁸ Alexander noted, “[r]evival music was at the forefront of shaping theology, worship and music styles of a movement that would forever change the face of American and global Christianity.”⁴⁹ These historical examples insinuated that musical lyrics have the ability to disciple the believer into well-rounded spiritual maturity.

Varied Positions on Lyrical Content

The evangelical community abounds with varied positions as to the type of music that congregations should sing. Sentiments toward musical style, instrumentation, leadership

⁴³ Ps. 1:2

⁴⁴ Ps. 103

⁴⁵ Nick Page. *And Now Let's Move into a Time of Nonsense*. (Waynesboro: Authentic Media, 2004): 19.

⁴⁶ Whaley, 85.

⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 127.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 170.

⁴⁹ Estrela Alexander. *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism*. (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2011): 114.

personnel and lyrics have been the subject of numerous debates, earning the title of “worship wars”⁵⁰ within the church. The content of worship lyrics, in particular, has sparked theological debates amongst evangelical denominations, some arguing for only singing songs with theological components while others contending that congregants should sing emotionally relatable songs.⁵¹ Scholars, such as Paris⁵², Kauflin⁵³, Polman,⁵⁴ Ruth⁵⁵, and Witvliet⁵⁶ strongly advocate for sound theological lyrics. Others, including Horness⁵⁷, Miller⁵⁸, and Houston⁵⁹ advocate for songs that speak to the heart of the people⁶⁰ and activate the movement of the Spirit.⁶¹ With righteous motives, scholars proclaimed their stances based on the idea that worship lyrics influence the spiritual lives of those who hear and sing them. Speaking of numerous theological studies on worship lyrics, Witvliet explained, “[e]ach wants nothing more than to lovingly challenge [believers] to a life of worship that is both passionate and well-

⁵⁰ Johanna Tonsing. “Searching for the ‘Good Song’: Determining the quality of Christian songs within the polarities of worship” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Pretoria, 2013).

⁵¹ Ibid, 3.

⁵² Jenell Williams Paris. “American Romance in Contemporary Christian Worship.” *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁵³ Travis Doucette. “An Analysis of the Need for a Congregational Songwriting Manual for the Evangelical Community” (Doctoral Thesis, Liberty Baptist Theological Seminary, 2014), 51.

⁵⁴ Bert Polman. “Praise the Name of Jesus: Are All Praise and Worship Songs for the Congregation?” *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁵⁵ Lester Ruth. “The Trinity in Contemporary Christian Worship Music.” *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁵⁶ John D. Witvliet. “Discipleship and the Future of Contemporary Worship Music: Possible Directions for Scholarship, Songwriting, and Public Worship.” *The Message in the Music: Studying Contemporary Praise and Worship*. (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2007).

⁵⁷ Joe Horness, “Contemporary Music-Driven Worship.” *Exploring the Worship Spectrum*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. (2004): 102.

⁵⁸ Gabriel Miller. *Idol Worship*. (Farmville: All Peoples Press, 2018): 61-67.

⁵⁹ Mark Evans. *Open Up The Doors: Music in the Modern Church*. (London: Equinox, 2006): 102.

⁶⁰ Doucette, 51.

⁶¹ Miller, 66.

grounded.”⁶² He contends that the purpose of varied positions on worship is to follow Ephesians 4:15-16: “But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which is it equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body’s growth in building itself up in love.”⁶³ While scholars have arrived at different conclusions regarding the content of worship lyrics, there is a common motive for spiritual edification through worship lyrics.

Statement of the Problem

Studying the *Songs of Fellowship* collection, Longhurst examined more than 300 contemporary songs, reading, counting, and comparing lyrics to determine whether contemporary worship lyrics were individual rather than corporate, too intimate, communicated a partial gospel, focused on worshipers rather than God, were too simplistic or repetitive, and lacked objective truth.⁶⁴ Her findings showed that 34% of songs were individual in nature and 21% of lyrics employed intimate language. The examination also showed that 57% of songs contained thoughts of the gospel and 43% of songs focused on “who God is, what God has done, and what God will yet do.”⁶⁵ Utilizing a similar qualitative content analysis, Paris studied 77 songs from CCLI’s lists between 1989-2005, seeking to determine the role of God and humans within the divine-human relationship; themes of lyrics portraying God as the “leading man” and humans as the “leading lady” within a romantic love relationship emerged from the analysis.⁶⁶ Sigler offered a brief historical approach to the analysis of CCLI’s “top 25,” examining the

⁶² Witvliet, 167,

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Christine Longhurst. “The Words We Sing: An Exploration of Textual Content in Contemporary Worship Music.” *Direction*, vol. 44, 2 (2015).

⁶⁵ Ibid, 166.

⁶⁶ Paris, 45-53.

evolution of the list within the past 15 years while providing industry related historical context.⁶⁷ He concluded that the contemporary worship of the '90s was not the same as the contemporary worship of the 2000s, signaling that current contemporary music may not always be considered as such. Thornton's analysis of Contemporary Christian Songs (CCS) incorporated a three-fold methodology, subjecting 25 of the most popular CCS to individual and collective analyses, surveying CCS-oriented churches to determine what can Christians sing and what they want to sing; he also interviewed CCS industry leaders on the topic of congregational engagement.⁶⁸ The findings suggested CCS as a functional means for facilitating worship, while acknowledging, "[t]ensions between the new and the familiar, the individual and communal, and the professional and vernacular."⁶⁹

Despite numerous conflicting positions on MCWM, it remains, generally, an unstudied field.⁷⁰ Worship songs can impact the lives of believers; however, little research has been conducted as to the effect of lyrics on spiritual edification. The limited body of research is confined to qualitative song analysis and historical research.

Statement of the Purpose

The purpose of this current study was to test the influence of lyric approach in evangelical worship songs (e.g., theological, emotional, or integrated) on spiritual edification according to the Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI) score in a sample of 70 undergraduate students, enrolled in a worship course at a large private university in the mid-Atlantic region of

⁶⁷ Sigler, 455.

⁶⁸ Daniel Thornton. "Exploring the Contemporary Congregational Song Genre: Texts, Practice, and Industry" (Doctoral Thesis, Macquarie University, 2014), 63-87.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 63.

⁷⁰ Daniel Read. "Why We Sing Along: Measureable Traits of Successful Congregational Songs" (Master's Thesis, University of Kentucky, 2017), 6.

the United States. The three types of lyric approaches considered in this study were theological, emotional, and integrated lyrics, which served as levels of the independent variable for the study.

Significance of the Study

This study is important for worship leaders, as it is the goal of worship leaders to spiritually engage congregations in worship. In attempt to build up the church, in 1 Corinthians 14:26, Paul encouraged believers to come together with, “[a] hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation,”⁷¹ signaling the teaching value of musical lyrics. Regarding discipling language for believers, Rienstra and Rienstra plainly noted, “[t]here’s no getting around the fact that words are a vital means through which God has chosen to reveal Himself to us and bless us...words are the primary medium in which we carry on our spiritual practice, our worship, and devotion.”⁷² When selecting the songs for corporate singing, worship leaders must rightly evaluate the content being delivered to church congregants. It is necessary that leaders are able to determine the most effective songs for ministry.

Christian songwriters can also gain insight from the research, as it can aid in the creation of new music that integrates the most spiritually edifying lyrical qualities. In his study on the necessity of a Christian songwriting manual, Doucette’s research suggested the need for songwriters to engage with lyrics that are scripturally based and theologically accurate,⁷³ as well as songs that display an emotional quality.⁷⁴ By understanding the effectiveness of their lyrics, songwriters can “attentively hear the heartbeat of the church, understand its communal needs and

⁷¹ 1 Cor. 14:26

⁷² Rienstra, Debra & Rienstra, Ron. *Worship Words: Discipling Language for Faithful Ministry*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009).

⁷³ Doucette, 53.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 69.

write with those things in mind.”⁷⁵ Witvliet noted that the analysis of Christian song lyrics can aid songwriters as they “fill in the gaps in the literature.”⁷⁶ By identifying the spiritual effectiveness of existing songs, songwriters can detect missing themes and write about the topics that will cause the church to flourish.

Additionally, individual worshipers can benefit from analyzing the lyrics of their musical diet.⁷⁷ Ward explained that a good lyrical diet should consist of worship songs, teaching songs, and learning songs.⁷⁸ Witvliet expounded, “Our worship music should consist of a balanced diet of theological themes, images, and ideas, as well as emotions.”⁷⁹ Seeing the benefits of the content, listeners can choose songs to aid in their spiritual edification, strengthening their personal theological perspectives and relationship with God.

Research Questions

Due to the impact lyrics can have on the believer, there is a need to investigate the lyrical components of modern Christian worship music and determine the role lyrics play in the spiritual edification of believers. Therefore, this study sought to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Does exposure to research lyrics, regardless of type, predict a change in spiritual transcendence from pretest to posttest?

RQ2: Does type of research lyric influence spiritual transcendence, after controlling for pretest spiritual transcendence scores, positive emotion, and negative emotion?

⁷⁵ Doucette, 51.

⁷⁶ Witvliet, 187.

⁷⁷ Ibid, 168.

⁷⁸ Pete Ward. *Selling Worship: How What We Sing has Changed the Church*. (Colorado Springs: Paternoster, 2005): 209-210.

⁷⁹ Witvliet, 171.

Hypotheses

The following were the specific alternative hypotheses:

H1: There will be a statistically significant difference in the impact of exposure to lyrics on posttest STI scores.

H2: Spiritual transcendence will be highest in the integrated lyric group, as compared to the theological and emotion only lyric groups, after controlling for pretest STI scores and positive and negative emotion ratings.

An integrated approach to worship lyrics enables the worshiper to engage not just the mind or emotions, but both in “spirit and in truth”.⁸⁰ This biblical description indicated that both the heart and mind aid one another in the worship of God. Jesus’s New Testament challenge exhorted believers to, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all your mind,”⁸¹ suggesting that complete love is derived from the integration of all parts of a person. Further, Ruth affirmed that “[t]heology can give us more motives to love God,”⁸² strengthening emotions. In turn, emotions “may constitute a heightened awareness of the Holy Spirit, an enabling of spiritual gifts, or deeper sense of God’s presence.”⁸³

The precedence of scripture has been corroborated in the psychological research of spirituality. Larson, Sawyers, and McCullough explain, “[b]oth religion and spirituality involve a search process that may involve emotional, cognitive, and behavioral forms of expressions...both spirituality and religion involve the subjective feelings, thoughts, and

⁸⁰ Jn. 4:24

⁸¹ Lk. 10:27

⁸² Ruth, 29.

⁸³ Evans, 102.

behaviors that arise from a search for the sacred.”⁸⁴ These aspects of personage are contingent upon one another, though individual experience such as trauma, circumstance, family of origin and other factors could cause one or more aspects to dominate above the others.⁸⁵ The American Holistic Health Association affirmed the importance of an integrated approach noting, “[a]n individual is a whole made up of interdependent parts, which are the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. When one part is not working at its best, it impacts all of the other parts of that person.”⁸⁶

With theological, cognitive, and physical disciplines supporting the integrated approach to the overall wellbeing of a person, it is logical that an integrated approach to song lyrics, incorporating the heart and mind, would produce more spiritual edification than lyrics that isolate theology or emotionalism alone.

Definition of Terms

Edification and Transcendence

As there are varied perceptions and connotations related to the core concepts of this study, there was a need for the definition of terms. The word “edification” was derived from the Latin term “aedification-em,” a construction term, specifically used for erecting buildings.⁸⁷ However, the word is more commonly used in a religious sense, with the meaning of “building up of the soul.”⁸⁸ Similarly, the term “transcendence” speaks of a beyond normal level of

⁸⁴ D.B. Larson, J.P. Swyers & M.E. McCullough. *Scientific Research on Spirituality and Health: A Consensus Report*. (Bethesda: National Institute for Healthcare Research, 1998): 22.

⁸⁵ Larry Seidlitz, Alexis D. Abernethy, Paul R. Duberstein, James S. Evinger, Theresa H. Chang, and Bar'Bara L. Lewis. "Development of the Spiritual Transcendence Index." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 41, no. 3 (2002): 439-53.

⁸⁶ Suzan Walter. “Holistic Health.” *American Holistic Health Association*. www.ahha.org.

⁸⁷ J.A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner, & Oxford University Press. *The Oxford English Dictionary*. (England; United Kingdom;: Clarendon Press, 1989).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

capability, as well as the importance and paramountcy of an experience.⁸⁹ Both terms express a heightened level of experience that is not accomplished through normal processes. Through theoretical discussions within focus groups, as well as empirical analysis, Seidlitz's definition of these terms was: "[a] subjective experience of the sacred that affects one's self-perception feelings, goals, and ability to transcend difficulties... [which] may involve different forms of expression, including emotional, cognitive, and behavioral manifestations."⁹⁰ When addressing change, the Apostle Paul urged believers to, "[b]e transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will."⁹¹ With the transformation to the mind of Christ comes the promise of a grasp of God's will, providing cognitive, spiritual, and emotional benefits to the believer. These gains were confirmed by other disciplines; Robitschek's personal growth initiative maintained, "[c]ontinued personal growth throughout life is important for a healthy individual as they encounter new challenges, transitions, and experiences."⁹² This holistic development has been associated with increased levels of psychological wellbeing and lower levels of depression and anxiety.⁹³ Thus, edification or transcendence is an important part of the well-rounded person.

Emotional Lyrics

While the word "emotion" is commonly related to the feelings of an individual, for the purposes of the research, the concept of emotion centered on Longhurst's examinations of a personal point of view, intimate or romantic language, and lyrical descriptions of feelings in

⁸⁹ J.A. Simpson, E. S. C. Weiner, & Oxford University Press.

⁹⁰ Larry Seidlitz, Abernethy, Duberstein, Evinger, Chang & Lewis, 441.

⁹¹ Rom. 12:2

⁹² C. Robitschek. "Personal Growth Initiative: The construct and its measure." *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 30 (1998): 183.

⁹³ Ibid.

worship.⁹⁴ This narrow definition was needed to provide distinct categories of word content, so that there was no overlap between the emotional and theological categories. Further, due to the varied positions mentioned in the introduction, it was likely that the concept of emotion could be perceived in an overly negative or positive light. Therefore, it was necessary to limit the classification.

Theological Lyrics

Similarly, for the purposes of this study, the term “theology” was limited to Ruth’s appeal for “Trinitarian contemplation”⁹⁵ and Longhurst’s call for “God’s story, to include the gospel narrative and Biblical stories.”⁹⁶ While theology is a broad term for the study of God, this research defined theological lyrics as “[revealing] some truth about who God is and what God has done.”⁹⁷ The study of God is vast, making it impossible to include every aspect of theology in the categorization. The narrow definition was needed in order to make the study feasible. One important tenant of theology that was omitted from the definition was the attribute of God’s love. While this trait of the Godhead is certainly rich in theology, the definitions of emotion and theology must remain mutually exclusive. As emotionally driven lyrics are frequently romantic in nature, it was only natural that the godly attribute of love, which is theological in nature, would overlap into the affective. Consequently, the attribute of love was excluded from the definition of theology.

⁹⁴Longhurst, 163, 166, 169.

⁹⁵ Ruth, 4.

⁹⁶Longhurst, 165.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Summary

MCWM is being sung corporately throughout the global church.⁹⁸ Numerous studies have shown the correlation between commercial musical lyrics and thoughts, emotions, and actions.⁹⁹ Yet, research is lacking concerning worship lyrics. A consideration of the background, including the historical rise to MCWM and the importance of lyric choices has been made in order to demonstrate a need for research examining the impact of MCWM lyric choices on spiritual edification.

⁹⁸ Cowen, 78.

⁹⁹ See Ticker, 2017; Bohm, Ruth & Schramm, 2016; Fiveash & Luck, 2016; Moussard, Bigand, Belleville & Peretz, 2014; Lee & Davidson, 2017; Barongan & Hall, 1995.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the existing literature pertaining to the concept of spiritual transcendence as well as the role of music in spiritual edification. The first section highlights historical trends in the implementation of theological and emotional texts within worshiping congregations. Section two identifies the varied theological positions to which scholars adhere within the praxis of Christian music. A third section recognizes previous methods of lyric analysis, as lyric studies. The fourth section explores previous findings of spiritual transcendence in relation to cognitive and affective functions within various populations. Section five reviews psychological studies relating edification to music and song lyrics. A final section reports on statistical instruments of spiritual transcendence.

Historical Studies

Outlining the lyrical shifts in hymnody from the New Testament through Post Reformation, Tonsing, Wepener, and Vos asserted, “In the course of church history, the pendulum has swung from excessive sentimentality to dry objectivity and back again several times.”¹⁰⁰ Their historical research showed a positive openness to emotion in singing during the time of David and Asaph’s Psalm writing, a shift to a cognitive teaching standpoint within the early church, followed by an extreme shift to “increasing restricted liturgy with prescribed words and actions” in the medieval period.¹⁰¹ Tonsing highlighted the two views of Reformation leaders, Calvin and Luther, noting Calvin’s continued adherence to singing only biblical texts

¹⁰⁰ J. Tonsing, Cas Wepener & Cas Vos. “The ‘Cognitive’ and the ‘Emotive’ Component in Christian Songs: Tracing the Shifts in Traditional and Contemporary Songs.” *Verbum et Ecclesia*, 36 (2013).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 4-5

and Luther's openness to using hymn lyrics in expressing emotion.¹⁰² Tonsing's historical approach concluded, "To argue that there should be a balance between the cognitive and the emotive in songs is relatively simple. To maintain such a balance practically is much more difficult."¹⁰³

While Tonsing's research provided an overview of Christian history, Noland's historical approach specifically analyzed the writings of psalmist and worship leader, Asaph. Through the study of his psalms, Noland offered implications for worship leaders today. Comparing Psalm 81 and Psalm 50, he argued for following after Asaph in portraying a balanced view of God's characteristics.¹⁰⁴ His research also encouraged connecting worship songs with the heart, through feelings; linking Asaph's worship leading to leaders of today, Noland explained, "Great artists are in touch with their emotions – the negative as well as the positive – they allow those emotions to breathe life into their art."¹⁰⁵

Seeking to gain perspective on present day worship wars, Lemke reflected upon emotive and theological arguments of the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries, noting a swift change of lyrical content from pre to post reformation, an interchange to *sola Scriptura* by Calvin and songs of personal experience by Watts and the Wesley brothers.¹⁰⁶ Lemke concluded that worship wars were "a perennial human problem...because the church lives in the tension between two poles:

¹⁰² Ibid, 6.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 12.

¹⁰⁴ Rory Noland. *The Worshiping Artist: Equipping You and Your Ministry Team to Lead Others in Worship*. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2007): 206.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid, 213.

¹⁰⁶ Steve, Lemke. "Worship Wars: Theological Perspectives on Hymnody Among Early Evangelical Christians." *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society*, (2014): 67-69.

remaining faithful to a tradition that has been received and maintaining relevance to a contemporary generation.”¹⁰⁷

Dedicating considerable attention to the lyrical changes that resulted from the reformation, Segler’s *Christian Worship* highlighted reformers from the Anglican, Reformed and Puritan traditions. Luther’s view, resulting in the Anglican Church, argued for freedom within intelligible worship, proposing “whatever is not forbidden by scriptures is allowed,” permitting the congregation to use hymnody as a means to express their relationship with God.¹⁰⁸ Calvin’s influence on the Reformed Church was intended to be a return to early Christian practices founded on scripture; “Calvin declared that whatever is not taught in the scriptures is not allowable in worship.”¹⁰⁹ Segler’s final argument stated that the Puritan or Free Church worship, which resulted from the reformation, impacted twentieth century worship more than any other.

He explained:

“The Free Churches sought the true genius of worship as they insisted on being free from traditional rites and ceremonies. They were weary of the old, the habitual, the established- hungry for what was radically new and untried. Out of this kind of conviction the radical reformers discarded the fixed liturgies of the medieval church and insisted upon a simpler approach to worship which would emphasize the spirit rather than the form.”¹¹⁰

In *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*, Evans provided a more comprehensive historical approach, beginning with the early church and spanning through recent developments. The early church was initially opened to spontaneous and emotional music, yet quickly moved to restricted liturgical singing in order to battle “the sensuality of the lyrics.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 78.

¹⁰⁸ Franklin, Segler. *Christian Worship: Its Theology and Practice*. (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1967): 42.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 44-45.

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 46.

¹¹¹ Evans, 25-26

The swift juxtaposition controlled much of the medieval period, with surviving music from this period being defined as “professional, complicated and refined, [and] music in which the congregation has no performative role.”¹¹² Evans also denoted another drastic revolution, which came with the emotional and romantic hymns from post reformation writers, suggesting “[t]he implications of such sacred exploitation of secular popularism continue to have resonance in contemporary congregational music.”¹¹³ Evans focus then moved to the 19th and 20th centuries’ thrust for subjectivity and emotionalism in lyrics, combined with tones of sexuality and sentimentality, which was also seen in the early church and immediately following the reformation.¹¹⁴ His conclusion was that much of the contemporary debate in regards to emotional and theological lyrics has already been debated throughout history.¹¹⁵

The historical studies, mentioned above, provide insight into the importance of lyrics within church doxology and praxeology. Each scholar examined the lyric approach positions throughout Christian history. Yet, these studies did not discuss the impact of lyric approach on spiritual edification.

Theological Positions

In spite of the historical repetition of song lyric arguments, varied doctrinal positions persist. While numerous polarities exist including influences on past and present, objectivity and subjectivity, community and individual, familiarity and diversity, affirmation and challenge, cross and glory, and vertical and horizontal,¹¹⁶ for the purposes of this literature review, content

¹¹² Ibid, 28.

¹¹³ Ibid, 30.

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 37.

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 24.

¹¹⁶ Tonsing, 3.

was refined to the positions of emotive lyrical content and cognitive lyrical content while also allowing for an integrated lyrical approach.

Emotive Lyric Positions

As one of the initial worship leaders of the Willow Creek Movement, Joe Horness reasoned that it is not the lyric content that matters but the heart of the worshiper. He said, “[c]ontemporary worship was born...out of an intense longing to somehow move from the casual, disinterested reciting of creeds and singing of hymns into an authentic time of loving and grateful interactions with the One who shed his blood for us.”¹¹⁷ In Horness’s view, lyrics were one of the tools used to engage with God in an authentic way. Thus, there is no concern over the use of individual, romantic, or emotional language, as “[t]he end is to meet with Jesus, to know his presence, and to fully engage our hearts in authentic expressions of love to Him.”¹¹⁸

Similarly, Horness’s position was shared by the Charismatic perspective. Miller contended for the use of emotional language within church worship, even if the lyric is indirect, such as a romantic line which could be said of a spouse or partner. He reasoned, “[a]ny worship planner who revels in pompously tossing out every imperfect lyric...does not take into consideration that God may very well desire to use an imperfect lyrics to bring revival to his people.”¹¹⁹

In defense of the common comparisons of emotionalism within MCWM and the presumed objectivity within hymns, Hartje argued, “that hymns simply have had more time to abandon the lower quality songs than praise and worship, with its comparably young

¹¹⁷ Horness, 102.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 109.

¹¹⁹ Miller, 67.

tradition.”¹²⁰ She noted that only about 200 of 400,000+ written hymns are utilized. As more MCWM was written it would be likely that the best of the genre would rise to utilization, which could lyrically contend with popular hymnody.

Thornton and Koenig also offered insights on the importance of emotionalism through individual worship perspective and vulnerability. Thornton explained that first person pronouns within MCWM lyrics allowed believers to internalize the music, making it a confession in a personally significant way.¹²¹ Koenig supported this adding, “[w]hat makes worship pleasing to God is sincere love, humble submission, and total openness.”¹²² Thus, the use of personal pronouns aided in an emotional expression of worship.

Affirming the value of emotionally-based lyrics, Vineyard songwriter, Andy Park explained that meditation is often accomplished through a “more subjective lyrical perspective.”¹²³ From Park’s view, emotional affirmations in worship were able to work down deep into the soul of a believer.¹²⁴

Also noting the relational components of emotional lyrics, Duke University theology professor, Jeremy Begbie, argued for the use of emotions in worship lyrics as one way to further sanctify the believer as he or she grows in the likeness of Christ.¹²⁵ Centering on the holistic view of Christ - mind, body, and spirit - Begbie explained:

¹²⁰ Gesa Hartje. “Keeping in Tune with the Times – Praise & Worship Music as Today’s Evangelical Hymnody in North America.” *Dialog: A Journal of Theology*, 48 (2009).

¹²¹ Thornton, 190.

¹²² Sarah Koenig. “This is My Daily Bread: Toward a Sacramental Theology of Evangelical Praise and Worship.” *Worship*, 82 (2008): 153.

¹²³ Andy Park. *To Know You More: Cultivating the Heart of the Worship Leader*. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2002): 69.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Jeremy Begbie & Steven Guthrie. *Resonant Witness: Conversations Between Music and Theology*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011): 353.

The physical body of Jesus is not only the vehicle of salvation but the very site of the promise of our own physical transformation...here the dynamics of musical emotion and the dynamics of emotion in Trinitarian worship come together in a remarkable way...in the life of Jesus, emotional “concentration” becomes redemptive...in him, we witness emotion shorn of all sinful distraction and confusion...all in the service of his mission. Here, in this human being, emotion is concentrated; here we are emotionally represented.¹²⁶

Cognitive Lyric Positions

In contrast, Calvin Institute director and professor of worship, John Witvliet’s reformed approach to worship lyrics compared congregational worship music to spiritual food, explaining, “[j]ust as the physical substances in our food become building blocks for our physical bodies, so, too, the textual and musical substances in our singing become the building blocks of our life of faith.”¹²⁷ He concluded that the evangelical community must incorporate, “the most Biblical of theological traditions” within song, as the metaphorically consumed content will either aid in spiritual formation and healthy growth or weaken individual faith and the body of Christ.¹²⁸

Similarly, Duke Divinity School researcher, Lester Ruth argued for the necessity of strong Trinitarian theology within MCWM. Defining the beliefs of the Christian faith, he explained, “[t]he witness of the apostles, recorded in their writings and crafted by subsequent Christians into a statement of faith, is that God exists and acts as three Persons in one Godhead...If this is scriptural Christianity, then why should Christians settle for anything less in the content of worship than the fullness of the revelation of God?”¹²⁹ He reasoned that those who

¹²⁶ Ibid, 352.

¹²⁷ John Witvliet. “Soul Food for the People of God: Ritual Song, Spiritual Nourishment, and the Communal Worship of God.” *Liturgical Ministry*, 10 (2001): 102.

¹²⁸ Witvliet, “Discipleship and the Future of Contemporary Worship Music.” 170.

¹²⁹ Ruth, 29.

crave emotional realism within worship music would likely find their love for God enhanced through theologically deep lyrical forms.¹³⁰

Similarly, Theologian Marva Dawn strongly contended for theological objectivity within MCWM. Her argument centered on the formation of the believer, according to song lyrics. Dawn maintained that God should be the subject of all Christian worship, as Christian character is formed in response to God's character.¹³¹ If God is not the theme of the Christian song, Dawn believed the singer would be wrongly roused into constructing his or her own faith.¹³² Further, Dawn refuted charismatic and seeker-friendly views of the benefits of emotionally subjective worship content stating, "[s]ubjectivities cannot be shared; telling you about my feelings will not bring about the same feelings in you. Only if I tell you what aroused my feelings can you respond to that same stimulus with subjective reactions of your own."¹³³

Though based on differing reasoning, Methodist theologian S. Paul Schilling also argued for strong theology over emotional lyrics, believing that musical melody already provided an emotional impact on believers. Asserting that melody and tempo, coupled with poetic language, could accentuate the affective, Schilling believed the lyrics should communicate the heritage of Christian faith.¹³⁴ He explained, "[t]he attainment of a sense of reality in worship requires understanding of the beliefs articulated... Truly to worship the Lord with gladness requires that

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Marva Dawn. *Reaching Out without Dumbing Down: A Theology of Worship for this Urgent Time*. (Grand Rapids: William E. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995): 109.

¹³² Ibid, 174.

¹³³ Ibid, 175.

¹³⁴ S. Paul Schilling. *The Faith We Sing: How the Message of Hymns Can Enhance Christian Belief*. (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1983): 27.

what we say accords with the character of the God we believe in and God’s aim for human life.”¹³⁵

Arguing for strong theological lyrics, Composer and Calvin Institute associate Greg Scheer advocated for lyrical content on the grounds of enculturation. He clarified, “[e]nculturation is the development of behaviors that one ‘catches’ rather than learns...for the music minister, the goal of providing long-range sustenance (to the congregation) means focusing on building a repertoire over time that paints a broad and deep picture of God and the Christian life.”¹³⁶ Scheer believed that theological lyrics aided in the spiritual and behavioral formation of believers, as they unconsciously began to behave according to what they have subliminally been taught through music.¹³⁷

Integrated Lyric Positions

While many theologians maintained an emotional or theological position within music, some scholars sought an integrated approach to worship lyrics. John Frame, though a reformed theologian, supported a more unified approach to emotionally- and theologically-based lyrics. Frame defended many of the common criticisms of Christian worship music, explaining that while criticisms of emotionalism are valid up to a point, Christian worship music should be utilized in the modern church.¹³⁸ Frame advocated for the ability of music to teach the

¹³⁵ Ibid, 24.

¹³⁶ Greg Scheer. *The Art of Worship: A Musician’s Guide to Leading Modern Worship*. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2006): 55-56.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ John M Frame. *Contemporary Worship Music: A Biblical Defense*. (Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 1997): 1-2.

congregation, while also noting that worship serves as a personal encounter with a loving Father relating to his children.¹³⁹ He concluded:

Both sides need to learn from one another, to gain a better grasp of the application of scripture to the difficult situations of the present day. The dialogue will demand more, not less intellectual effort. It will require us to make some distinctions that we have overlooked in the past. And it will require a greater determination to live and worship according to Biblical principle rather than by either the human traditions of the past or the innovations of the present...our chief concern should not be to measure up to any such labels, but to hear and obey what God says to us.¹⁴⁰

Baptist theologian, Franklin Segler, also provided a more balanced approach to emotion and theological lyrics. He explained that emotional worship and theological objectivity need one another in order to be effective.¹⁴¹ He purported, “[w]orship without theology is sentimental and weak; theology without worship is cold and dead. Worship and theology together combine to motivate a strong Christian faith and to empower a fruitful Christian life.”¹⁴²

Following Witvliet’s analogy of worship lyrics acting as spiritual nourishment for the believer, London ecclesiology professor Pete Ward based his integrated argument on a healthy diet.¹⁴³ Ward’s conclusion was that there must be a balance of objective and subjective within worship, identifying the need for emotional expression, but also the use of the mind. For Ward, neither emotional nor theological songs are “idolatrous in themselves. The problem comes in the overall diet, not just of worship songs but also of teaching and learning.”¹⁴⁴ He called for a blended use of lyrical content within corporate worship settings.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 105.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 52-53.

¹⁴¹ Segler, 58.

¹⁴² Ibid, 57.

¹⁴³ Witvliet, 102.

¹⁴⁴ Ward, 209-210.

Ron and Debra Reinstra also provided a balanced view point of utilizing emotion and scripture study within worship. While reformed in theology, they specifically highlighted the importance of emotion in worship, citing that believers should be free to bring their whole selves before God and express feelings ranging from joy and sadness to brokenness and hurt.¹⁴⁵ They also suggested a balanced view of spontaneous worship, explaining, “[s]pontaneous words are Spirit-filled if the speaker has prepared through prayer and study.”¹⁴⁶ In this preparation, spirit filled emotion can flow freely through theologically studied worshippers.

While there were numerous underpinnings and positions regarding the theology of lyrics, more research is needed to understand how these lyrical positions impact believers through spiritual edification. The presented perspectives of theologians, historians, and church leaders, above, argue for the type of lyrics the church should sing, yet did not verify the impact that the lyrics can have on the worshiper.

Methods of Lyric Analysis

In addition to varied scriptural positions on the use of emotive and theological content in MCWM, many scholars have developed suggested methods for analyzing songs for the evangelical community, with approaches varying according to doctrinal views. From a reformed standpoint, Debra and Ron Reinstra offered a model for determining an effective worship lyric. First, they compared the language used within the song to the purpose of the occasion for which it may be sung. Then, the song was evaluated for innovative imagery and appropriateness. Songs were to be examined for linguistic pith, not simply repeating without contributing to a deeper theological message.¹⁴⁷ Adding to the Reinstra’s model, Calvin Institute’s Greg Scheer

¹⁴⁵ Reinstra, 108.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, 109.

¹⁴⁷ Reinstra, 264.

suggested that analyzing repertoire should include determining a balance as to who is speaking to whom within songs, such as “human to human,” “human to God,” or “God to human.”¹⁴⁸ He also suggested analyzing songs for worship action, as opposed to subjective affect, utilizing a song based on the lyric content instead of its tempo or melody.¹⁴⁹

Presenting a Methodist view of lyrical analysis, Schilling questioned songs based on the central lyric theme and the unity of ideas. For Schilling, lyrics should “manifest a progression of thought rather than repetitiveness or circularity.” Further, lyrics should be poetic rather than slipshod in detail, while remaining grammatically correct and easily sing-able. Schilling also emphasized a verbiage balance of both intellectual and emotional content, “avoiding both dry abstraction and effusive sentimentality.”¹⁵⁰

Arguing from a Charismatic perspective, Miller suggested challenging songs on the following grounds: False or not doctrinally correct, peripherally fundamental, indirect or not inherently Christian, lacking in theological richness, linguistically vague, and aesthetically clumsy lyrics.¹⁵¹ While lyrics should undergo scrutiny, Miller did not affirm removing all songs that fail these critiques, explaining, “I will never put a false song in front of my congregation. But I am willing to leave the door open for a peripheral, indirect, shallow, vague, or clumsy song...Because there is another ultimate test: Is the song engaging to the congregation? And is the song effective in activating the presence and ministry of the Holy Spirit?”¹⁵²

¹⁴⁸ Scheer, 56-57.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 57-58.

¹⁵⁰ Schilling, 42.

¹⁵¹ Miller, 62.

¹⁵² Ibid, 65-66.

The methods of analysis, mentioned above, further exemplified the theological positions and framework from which scholars use to determine edifying congregational songs. As Reinstra notes, “[t]heological differences among traditions do have bearing on worship words, [highlighting] the importance of worship words in teaching theological conviction.”¹⁵³ Yet these methods did not engage in detecting or measuring the spiritual impact of lyric choices.

Lyric Analysis Studies

In addition to published theological positions on lyric analysis, numerous studies have been conducted in order to evaluate worship lyrics themselves. Research has ranged from the scrutiny of specified collections such as Hillsong’s repertoire and the *Songs of Fellowship* by Kingsway Communications, to decade-long lyrics evolution studies, and a thorough examination of the history of top charted CCLI songs.

Cowan’s 2017 study on Hillsong Music’s evolving theological emphases observed 170 Hillsong songs from 2007-2015, coding lyrics based on objective and subjective content, perspective of the worshiper, Divine address in second or third person, doctrinal engagement, and expressions of piety.¹⁵⁴ The results showed frequent theological themes of atonement, “Christus Victor,” and the incarnation of the Word made flesh.¹⁵⁵ In addition, the study found that 71% of songs centered on an individual perspective instead of a corporate view.¹⁵⁶

In a similar study, Longhurst analyzed a specified collection of songs from Kingsway Communications, comprising 509 compositions between the years of 2007-2011.¹⁵⁷ The analysis

¹⁵³ Reinstra, 19.

¹⁵⁴ Cowan, 82-83.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 89-90.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid, 90.

¹⁵⁷ Longhurst, 159.

hinged on six common criticisms of contemporary worship music: Individual rather than corporate, too intimate, a partial gospel, focusing on worshipers rather than God, too simplistic and repetitive, and too little objective truth. Her findings showed that of the 509 songs reviewed, 34% utilized an individual perspective, 21% used some degree of intimate language, 57% contained at least some information of God's story, 43% focused on the God rather than the worshiper, and 16% were cyclical or repetitive in nature.¹⁵⁸ Longhurst concluded that despite criticisms, the worship music genre is a positive addition to corporate worship.

Similarly, Evan's 2002 study analyzed 150 songs used in Australian congregations from 1992-1999. His analysis covered point of view, personal address of God, and intimate lyrics. He concluded, "[t]he use of individual point of view in contemporary congregational song is customary, indicative of a deficiency in body unity songs, and songs involved in the horizontal level of corporate worship."¹⁵⁹ Further results showed that second person address toward God was used in over 60% of songs, communicating intimacy and romanticism.¹⁶⁰

Much research has been done on popular worship music, as determined by CCLI charts. Recent studies have analyzed lyrics according to theology, as well as romanticism and emotionalism. Lester Ruth's 2007 qualitative lyric analysis reviewed the top 77 CCLI songs from 1989-2005 in attempt to support his belief of a lack of Trinitarian theological content within worship music. Ruth's method of analysis asked questions relating to the naming of the Trinity within worship lyrics, the mention of the activity of the Triune Members and the exploration of desired characteristics of Christians, as exemplified by the Trinity.¹⁶¹ His results

¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 160-168.

¹⁵⁹ Evans, 137.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Ruth, 30-31.

showed that none of the songs referred to the Trinity, while only 4 named all three Persons within the Trinity.¹⁶² In addition, only two songs directed believers to worship the Trinity while none of the songs articulate the activity of the Divine Persons among themselves.¹⁶³ His study concluded, “[i]f explicit witness to the Trinity is not the high priority, then what is? The songs demonstrate a common concern: the priority of a shared affective experience in the worship of God.”¹⁶⁴

Following the top 77 CCLI songs from 1989-2005, Paris’s study centered on the criticism of MCWM’s tendency toward romanticism, or “Jesus is my boyfriend” lyrics. Paris categorized songs as romantic if the lyrics used American love colloquialisms, emotionally intimate language, or physically intimate language.¹⁶⁵ After reviewing all of the songs, Paris identified 27 songs which were classified as romantic in nature and was able to identify themes based on the content including: God as the “leading man,” humans as the “leading lady,” and “riding off together into the sunset.”¹⁶⁶ Her conclusions were that, “[r]omantic worship songs may be helpful in encouraging an intimate, heartfelt relationship with God, and such a purpose should be conserved...however, romance is not the whole story when it comes to love. Love is about commitment, hard work, change over time, and at times, confusion and doubt.”¹⁶⁷

Taking a less narrowed approach to CCLI chart analysis, Sigler’s 2013 study documented the changes within the top 25 CCLI list over a 15-year period. Beginning with the first top 25 list, in 1997, Sigler observed songs that possessed a simplistic melodic line, repetitive scripture

¹⁶² Ibid, 31.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 34-35.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 37

¹⁶⁵ Paris, 45-46

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 47-50.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 52.

lyrics, singular pronoun usage, and a lack of theological sophistication.¹⁶⁸ Comparing the 1997 top 25 list with the 2002 top 25 list, he noted a change as “the term ‘modern worship’ was introduced as a means of differentiating the updated ‘rock’ style from the earlier ‘soft rock’ sound of the original ‘praise and worship’ songs.”¹⁶⁹ During this change, theological content returned to the CCLI charts, communicating thoughts of the Trinity and the glory of God while still incorporating intimacy between the singer and Christ.¹⁷⁰

While each of these studies contributed to the literature regarding Christian song lyrics, the focus remained on the lyrics themselves. They did not address the potential spiritual benefits of the lyrical approach. More research is needed to discern the effect of lyrics on worshipers.

Spiritual Transcendence Studies

Spiritual Transcendence is considered to be a subjective state in which one is alleviated from personal limitations, distress, or physical suffering, even if these problems continue to exist within a conscious experience.¹⁷¹ Seidlitz posited that spiritual transcendence is related to cognitive, affective, behavioral and transcendent components that act interdependently.¹⁷² The following studies have shown that spirituality and transcendence, in general, provide both cognitive and affective edification. These studies provided support for the aforementioned historical church practices and beliefs of theologians that worship lyrics serve as a transformative tool in the lives of Christian believers.

¹⁶⁸ Sigler, 450.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid, 452.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid, 453.

¹⁷¹ Seidlitz, 441.

¹⁷² Ibid.

To assess the relationship between spiritual transcendence and burnout, 321 ordained United Methodist Clergy members participated in an extended survey consisting of the Maslach Burnout Inventory-General Survey, Situational Shift Scale, Satisfaction with Life Scale, Spiritual Transcendence Scale, Bipolar Adjective Rating Scale, and Occupational Role Questionnaire. The researchers found that high levels of spiritual transcendence were associated with low levels of “a persistent negative state of mind that is characterized by exhaustion, a sense of reduced effectiveness, decreased motivation, and the development of dysfunctional attitudes and behaviors.”¹⁷³ While limited to a specific participant sample, the results indicated that the Spiritual Transcendence Scale displayed a significant correlation in buffering burnout mindset.¹⁷⁴

Another study sought to examine the relationship among spirituality, social support, mental health, and physical health in relief and development workers. A questionnaire, consisting of the Spiritual Transcendence Index and the Social Provisions Scale, was administered to 111 international relief and development workers.¹⁷⁵ The study found a statistically significant positive relationship between spiritual transcendence and mental and physical health.¹⁷⁶ The association suggested that “[t]he experience of spiritual transcendence may be a protective factor against mental and physical ailments.”¹⁷⁷

In addition to mental health benefits, spiritual transcendence was also linked to benefits within emotional intelligence. Seeking to examine the effect of transcendence on overall

¹⁷³ Jonathan Golden, Ralph L. Piedmont, Joseph W. Ciarrocchi, and Thomas Rodgerson. "Spirituality and burnout: an incremental validity study." *Journal of Psychology and Theology* 32, no. 2 (2004): 116.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 123.

¹⁷⁵ Barron Hung. "Spirituality, Health, and Depression in International Relief and Development Workers" (Doctoral Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2004).

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 23

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

emotional intelligence, Billard surveyed 65 Catholic sisters, incorporating the Baron EQ-I to measure emotional intelligence, the NEO-Five Factor Inventory, to assess personality traits, and a combination of the Spiritual Perspective Scale and Self-Transcendence Scale to display a global spiritual transcendence score.¹⁷⁸ Hierarchical multiple regression analysis showed that spiritual transcendence added a significant 1.7% to the variance in emotional intelligence, above personality traits and other demographic variables.¹⁷⁹ The results suggested a relationship between emotional intelligence and spiritual transcendence.¹⁸⁰

As well as an overall benefit to emotional intelligence, transcendence was linked to the reduction of specific negative emotions. In 2018, Piotrowski, Żemojtel-Piotrowska, and Clinton sought to determine if spiritual transcendence reduced the anxiety often associated with mortality salience. One hundred-forty high school students were asked to write about specific prompts, with the experimental group writing in regards to emotions that accompany thoughts of death and the control group writing about emotions that accompany watching television. Results were coded and analyzed using a 2x3 ANOVA. The results showed an interaction between spiritual transcendence and morality salience, with a lack of spiritual transcendence increasing negative evaluations of death anxiety. The findings suggested that spiritual transcendence acted as a buffer against the anxiety of mortality salience.¹⁸¹

Not only was spiritual transcendence found to reduce negative emotions, it was also related to increasing positive emotions associated with the purpose of one's life. Trama's study

¹⁷⁸ Ann Billard, "The Impact of Spiritual Transcendence on the Wellbeing of Aging Catholic Sisters" (Doctoral Dissertation, Loyola College, 2001).

¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 63.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 99.

¹⁸¹ Jarosław P Piotrowski, Magdalena Żemojtel-Piotrowska, and Amanda Clinton. "Spiritual Transcendence as a Buffer Against Death Anxiety." *Current Psychology*, 02 (2018): 1-7

sought to determine the significance of transcendence towards the feeling of a meaningful life. A survey, consisting of the Life Regard Index, Spiritual Transcendence Scale, and the Loyola Generativity Scale, was answered by 100 middle-aged adults in India. Findings indicated spiritual transcendence was a main positive predictor in the affective perception of a meaningful life.¹⁸² The research suggested that “[h]aving a spiritual transcendent orientation may help adults view life from a more objective or larger perspective, making them see their true meaning or purpose.”¹⁸³

More than positive emotions associated with life’s purpose, spiritual transcendence was also been shown to increase hope. Seeking to determine a significant correlation between hope and spiritual transcendence, McCoy studied 120 sober adults in recovery from drugs and alcohol abuse. A questionnaire, which included the Addiction Severity Questionnaire, the Flow in Life Scale, the Spiritual Transcendence Scale, the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale, the Meaning of Life Questionnaire, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support, the Attitudes Toward Substance Abuse Scale, the Brief Situational Confidence Questionnaire, the Brief Symptom Inventory, and the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale, was mailed to participants. After analyzing responses, the results showed spiritual transcendence as a significant positive relationship with hope and daily flow. The findings of the study suggested that positive sober experiences, including spiritual transcendence, may foster the feeling of hope.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸² Sangeeta Trama. "Meaning in Life in Late Adulthood: Role of Spiritual Transcendence and Generativity." *Indian Journal of Positive Psychology* 3, no. 2, 6 (2012): 212.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ K. McCoy (2008) “Flow and Spiritual Transcendence: The Conditions of Positive Experience and Usefulness for Therapeutic Outcome in Substance Abuse Recovery” (Dissertation, Wright Institute, 2008).

In addition to positive emotions pertaining to hope and life purpose, perceptions of spirituality and spiritual transcendence were also linked to the ability to cope with stress and build and maintain successful relationships. Using 81 high school principals in Louisiana, a study was conducted to identify the role spirituality played in work duties, the ability to cope with stress, and developing relationships within the work place. The Assessment of Spirituality and Religious Sentiments and the Spiritual Transcendence Scale were utilized to measure religious behaviors and subjective spirituality, in addition to individual interviews. Over 90% of participants indicated that spirituality was integrated into their leadership duties and decision making skills. Qualitative themes revealed that spirituality acted as a coping mechanism for day-to-day tension and the development of healthy work relationships. The findings suggested that spiritual transcendence can aid in the establishment and maintenance of relationships, while also helping to cope with job related stressors.¹⁸⁵

The aforementioned studies presented findings on the relationship spirituality has with cognitive and affective components of life. Spiritual transcendence has been linked to reductions of negative thoughts and feelings, as well as an increase in positive thinking and feeling. As historical and theological positions purported a significance in spiritual edification through music, it was necessary to review the relationship of spiritual transformation within both music and lyrics.

Music Studies

The field of psychology is teeming with studies that intersect music and the holistic person. As the discipline of music therapy continues to grow and thrive, more research has

¹⁸⁵ Gerod Keith Macon, Sr. "School Leaders and Spirituality: Perspectives of Spirituality and Spirituality's Influence on Principals in Public Schools in Southeastern Louisiana." (Doctoral Dissertation, Southeastern Louisiana University, 2014).

become available, with studies examining music's influence on cognitive, emotional, and physical outcomes. This section identifies pertinent literature related to music and lyrics, as well as studies pertaining to the spiritual wellbeing and formation within the church body.

Music

Music has been thought to serve as a mechanism for regulating emotions. A 2018 study sought to determine the interchange of personality dimensions and emotion modulation strategies within music therapy patients. The researchers conducted a cross-sectional study with 137 patients who were currently being treated in a psychiatric hospital. After attending a music therapy treatment session, participants completed a self-assessment questionnaire. The Inventory for the Assessment of Activation and Arousal Modulation through Music and Self-Concept Inventory were used in the self-assessment questionnaire. A regression analysis was performed, with personality as a potential predictor and emotions as the dependent variable. The researchers found that music therapy participants were more likely to use music as a resource for emotion modulation such that high insecurity predicted the use of music for cognitive problem solving and positive stimulation in everyday life. The researchers noted that “[m]usic therapy helps patients acquire more cognitive related strategies or emotion modulation techniques, as opposed to simply venting negative emotions.”¹⁸⁶

Similarly, Van Goethem and Sloboda's study examined how music regulates emotions, which emotions music could aid, and whether music was a successful emotion regulation strategy. Forty-four undergraduates, postgraduates, and academic staff took notes on the times they deliberately listened to self-chosen music and answered questions about their music listening experiences. The study found that music aided in emotion regulation through

¹⁸⁶ Gebhardt, Dammann, Loescher, Wehmeier, Vedder, & Georgi, 61.

distraction, introspection, and coping. Further, music aided in promoting both happiness and relaxation. Finally, the researchers concluded that music served as a successful affective regulation device.¹⁸⁷

In addition to music being utilized as an emotional regulating mechanism, studies have also demonstrated the ability for music to incite emotions such as anger, sadness, and peacefulness. Toohey's study examined the outcomes of peaceful and angry music on thoughts and feelings, hypothesizing that music consumption would affect thinking in response to changes in mood. A 3x2x2 mixed design was used, incorporating 60 participants who identified an anger inducing event before listening to either angry music, peaceful music, or no music. Respondents then participated in a word completion task, answering questions from the Survey of Personal Beliefs, Anger Rumination Scale, and State Anger Scale. The study found that participants who listened to angry music were more likely to report feelings of anger than those who listened to peaceful music, suggesting that listening to peaceful music during an angering moment could aid in lessening anger emotions.¹⁸⁸

Supporting the concept of music's ability to regulate emotions, Vuoskoski and Erola's study sought to determine a relationship between sad music and sad emotions and memories. After recruiting 120 participants, the researchers established four groups who first completed the PANAS before listening to either an unfamiliar sad song, a neutral song, or a sad song of choice, before recalling a sad personal event and writing about it. The results showed that sad songs produced the emotion of sadness and the recalling of sad autobiographical events, while happy songs corresponded with feelings of happiness and the recalling of pleasant autobiographical

¹⁸⁷ Goethem & Sloboda, 208.

¹⁸⁸ Michael J Toohey. "Effects of Peaceful and Angry Music, and Music Enjoyment, on Angry Thoughts and Feelings" (Dissertation, Hofstra University, 2012), 64.

events. The research indicated that sad songs changed emotion-related memory and judgment, though it depended on the relevance of the song to the listener.¹⁸⁹

Confirming the capacity for music to regulate and incite emotions, a 2018 study sought to determine whether music-based intervention would correlate with decreased stress levels in adolescents. Students from Australia's National Youth Mental Health Initiative participated in a self-report study. Participants partook in a music intervention session before completing additional self-report measures. A convergent analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data showed a decrease in psychological distress following musical intervention, as well as themes of music as a personal development tool and a greater awareness of music and mental health. The researchers also reported that some decreases in stress were related to music-based intervention, suggesting, "[m]usic provides a powerful platform for leveraging engagement in services and improvements in distress."¹⁹⁰

Other research focused on the positive emotions that can be evoked through music. Laukka's study sought to determine the uses of music within everyday living. Five-hundred older adults in Sweden completed a questionnaire about the number of times they listened to music, when they encountered music in day-to-day activities, affective responses to music, and motivations for listening to music. Psychological and affective wellbeing, life satisfaction and personality traits were also assessed. The findings indicated that music provided a source of positive emotions. Participants also specified the use of music as a strategy for seeking pleasure, mood regulation, and relaxation. Further, music was found to aid in a sense of belonging and identity.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁹ Jonna K. Vuoskoski & Tuomas Eerola. "Can Sad Music really make You Sad? Indirect Measures of Affective States Induced by Music and Autobiographical Memories." *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 6, no. 3 (2012): 204.

¹⁹⁰ McFerran, Hense, Koike, & Rickwood, 567.

¹⁹¹ Laukka, 215.

Music was also shown to have a correlation to health. The objective of Solli, Rolvsjord, and Borg's study was to explore participant experiences with music therapy and the role it played in mental health recovery. The researchers performed a qualitative analysis, using the first-hand experiences of participants cited in 14 existing studies. Four themes emerged from the analysis, including "having a good time," "being together," "feeling," and "being someone." The research indicated that music can play a role in the social and personal recovery process from a mental health problem.¹⁹²

An additional work centered on the relationship between music participation and spiritual health benefits. Moss's study asked if singing in a choir provided spiritual health benefits while also seeking to understand how choir members experience the spiritual transcendent aspects of music. Using a posted online survey, 1,779 respondents answered 28 questions relating to perception of health benefits of choir participation. A qualitative thematic analysis was conducted, showing consistent responses regarding spiritual benefits of singing, the role music plays in overcoming difficult circumstances, and the use of music in finding meaning amidst suffering. The findings suggested "[m]usic-making can allow expression of spiritual beliefs and may strengthen spiritual wellbeing."¹⁹³

Each of these studies has shown the potential impact of music, in general, on emotions and mental health. The research suggested that music can act as a regulating mechanism for personal wellbeing. As the present study was focused on words, it was necessary to explore the literature that was narrowed to the benefits of musical lyrics.

¹⁹² Hans Petter Solli, Randi Rolvsjord, & Marit Borg. "Toward Understanding Music Therapy as a Recovery-Oriented Practice within Mental Health Care: A Meta-Synthesis of Service Users' Experiences." *Journal of Music Therapy* 50, no. 4 (2013): 244.

¹⁹³ Moss, 1-12.

Lyrics

Psychological research has explored the role of music lyrics as they pertain to thought life. Seeking to corroborate the General Learning Model, Greitemeyer's 2007 study centered on the concept that prosocial media promoted prosocial outcomes.¹⁹⁴ Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions: a song with prosocial lyrics or a song with neutral lyrics. After hearing the song, participants completed a task of filling in missing words from various sentences. The results showed that participants who listened to the prosocial lyrics had higher prosocial word completion scores, indicating that "[l]istening to songs with prosocial content increased the accessibility of prosocial thoughts."¹⁹⁵ Conversely, Bohm, Ruth, and Schramm's 2016 study utilized a similar method to analyze the effect of prosocial lyrics on decreasing aggressive thoughts and feelings.¹⁹⁶ The results indicated that participants listening to prosocial lyrics experienced significantly less aggressive thoughts.¹⁹⁷

Studies have also been implemented to determine the effects of lyrics on human emotion. Ransom's exploration of the relationship between lyrics and positive psychology indicated that "[l]yrics have the potential to increase two of the five elements of wellbeing in the PERMA model, [specifically] positive emotions and meaning."¹⁹⁸ The study concluded that positive lyrics, supported with melody, can influence affirmative emotions, which enrich overall wellbeing.¹⁹⁹ Supporting these findings, Fiveash and Luck's 2016 study found that sad and

¹⁹⁴ Tobias Greitemeyer. "Effects of Songs with Prosocial Lyrics on Prosocial Thoughts, Affect, and Behavior." *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45 (2009): 186-190.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid, 188.

¹⁹⁶ Bohm, 282.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Ransom, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 21.

happy lyrics produced differential effects of emotion induction.²⁰⁰ Dividing participants into two groups, the researchers allowed each group to listen to a different song; one group listened to sad lyrics, along with a slow tempo and minor key melody and the other group listened to positive lyrics with an upbeat tempo and major key melody. After listening, participants were asked to identify incorrect word pairings. The results showed that those who listened to the sad song identified more word pairings than those who listened to the happy song, indicating that lyrical content has an impact on mood and emotion.²⁰¹

A behavioral study by Barongan and Hall sought to determine the effects of lyrics on cognitive distortions and aggressive behavior.²⁰² Researchers divided male participants in two groups, with one group listening to misogynous rap music and the other listening to neutral rap music. Participants then viewed neutral, sexual-violent, and aggressive short films and were asked to choose one film to show to a female researcher. The results showed that 30% of men who listened to misogynous lyrics chose to share the assaultive video with a female, while only 7% of men who listened to neutral lyrics chose to show the same video. The findings suggested that misogynous lyrics aided sexual aggressive behavior.²⁰³

Through the results of the aforementioned studies, it could be concluded that lyrics can impact thoughts, feelings and behavior. These studies underscore the importance of assessing lyrical content that is being heard and its influence on outcomes related to other areas of the human experience, including spiritual transcendence. While music studies on the generality of lyrics is expansive, less research has addressed the impact music and other religious practices on

²⁰⁰ Fiveash, 1346.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 1357.

²⁰² Barongan, 195.

²⁰³ Ibid.

spiritual wellbeing and formation. Lee and Davidson’s 2017 thematic analysis qualitatively addressed motivating factors in Korean migrant weekly church participation, with results that showed “[m]usic performed in religious forms, such as praise and worship...was found to intensify spiritual experiences of the people as a group, and over time, each participant experienced improved physical and mental wellbeing.”²⁰⁴ In addition, Abernathy’s 2015 analysis narrowed on corporate worship practices and spiritual formation.²⁰⁵ Seeking to determine the spiritual formation of the worship leader, vocational worship leaders were interviewed concerning preparation for worship leadership, cognition and affect in worship, a spiritual perspective in worship, and the congregation’s roles in worship. The study identified themes of musical embodiment, spiritual disciplines, being used as a “sacred vessel”, and expressed desires for communication to be influence in worship leader spiritual formation.²⁰⁶ Due to limited research, there was a need to examine to expand the literature on spiritual edification and lyrical content within the evangelical community.

Spiritual Transcendence Index

To conduct research on the impact of lyric choices on spiritual edification, it was necessary to determine suitable instrumentation. While the terms religion and spirituality are often used interchangeably, King and Koenig highlighted a distinction, associating religion with praxis and spirituality with emotional experience.²⁰⁷ Numerous measures have been developed for assessing religiousness and spirituality, yet most are centered on religious practices, beliefs,

²⁰⁴ Lee, 183.

²⁰⁵ Alexis Abernathy, Brittany Rice, Laura Rold, Kevin Kurian, Gillian Grannum & Heather Jones. “Corporate Worship and Spiritual Formation: Insights from Worship Leaders.” *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*, 34, 3 (2015): 266-279.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 275.

²⁰⁷ Michael B. King & Harold Koenig. “Conceptualising Spirituality for Medical Research and Health Service Provision.” *BMC Health Services Research*, 9 (2009): 116.

and behaviors.²⁰⁸ As spiritual edification or transcendence is associated with “personal or experiential terms, such as a belief in God or a higher power and having a relationship with God or a higher power,”²⁰⁹ an instrument which measured perceptions of spirituality must be utilized. The following examined the instrument used for this study, the Spiritual Transcendence Index.

The Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI) was developed in 2000 by Seidlitz, Abernethy, Duberstein, Evinger, Chang, and Lewis to measure mental, emotional motivational, and resilient qualities within spirituality.²¹⁰ An initial study focused on the writing of 90 test items for the STI and feedback from three focus groups consisting of six African-American clergy, five white women within a clinical pastoral education class, and seven white Christian participants. This study led to two revised versions of the instrument, which were administered, via mail, to participants living in Rochester, NY, with analyses resulting in a narrowed 32-item scale consisting of God and Spirit subscales, with four content domains pertaining to cognitive, affective, behavioral, and transcendent components.²¹¹ A second study tested the updated scale using 116 Rochester residents, 95 Presbyterian clergy members, and 142 seminary students. Based on distribution across the two subscales and four content domains, eight items were selected for the final version of the STI.²¹² A final study employed 226 respondents completed the STI, along with the DUREL, PANAS-X, and Self-Regulation Questionnaire-Religiousness. Overall results of the studies displayed internal consistency and validity, with researchers

²⁰⁸ Seidlitz, 439.

²⁰⁹ Brian J. Zinnbauer, Kenneth I. Pargament, Brenda Cole, Mark S. Rye, Eric M. Butter, Timothy G. Belavich, Kathleen M. Hipp, Allie B. Scott, and Jill L. Kadar. "Religion and Spirituality: Unfuzzifying the Fuzzy." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 4 (1997): 561.

²¹⁰ Seidlitz, 22.

²¹¹ Seidlitz, “Development”, 442.

²¹² *Ibid*, 444.

suggesting that “[t]he STI may fulfill the need expressed by scholars in the field for a psychometrically rigorous measure of spirituality for research purposes.”²¹³

The STI was utilized in various studies pertaining to the cognitive, emotive, behavioral, and overcoming components of spirituality. Kim and Seidlitz’s study assessed the relation of spirituality with emotional and physical adjustment to stress. One hundred-thirteen college students completed repeated questionnaires of the STI, COPE-S, College Student’s Daily Events Scale, PANAS, and Cohen-Hoberman Inventory of Physical Symptoms scales. The results showed that spiritual transcendence buffered physical and emotional symptoms of stress. The researchers concluded that transcendence “may be an important resource in transcending or ameliorating stressors”.²¹⁴

The STI was also used to associate spirituality with positive emotions. An additional study of 287 hospital workers in South Korea utilized the STI, DUREL, and the PANAS to determine the association of transcendence and wellbeing. Regression analyses were used to examine the effects of spirituality on the affective. The results indicated that spirituality was positively associated with positive affect, joviality, self-assurance, attentiveness, and serenity. This suggested that “[o]ne’s belief in the sacred is associated with emotional wellbeing.”²¹⁵

The interrelation of social factors, thoughts and behaviors was also studied, using the STI. Good and Willoughby’s study sought to assess the relationship between spirituality and psychosocial adjustment. Participants consisted of 803 Canadian adolescents in 11th and 12th grades. Students completed two surveys consisting of the STI, the Centre for Epidemiological

²¹³ Ibid, 451.

²¹⁴ Youngmee Kim & Larry Seidlitz. “Spirituality Moderates the Effect of Stress on Emotional and Physical Adjustment.” *Personality and Individual Differences*, 32 (2002): 1386.

²¹⁵ Youngmee Kim, Larry Seidlitz, Youja Ro, James S. Evinger, & Paul R. Duberstein. “Spirituality and Affect: A Function of Changes in Religious Affiliation.” *Personality and Individual Differences*, 37 (2004): 867.

Studies Depression, and the Inventory of Parent and Peer Attachment. The results of hierarchical regression analyses indicated that higher personal spirituality aided in positive psychosocial adjustment in terms of overall wellbeing, teen-parent relationships, and within academia while also predicting lower probabilities of adolescent substance use.²¹⁶

Eaves used the STI to address the potential correlation among resilience, humility, gratitude, and spiritual transcendence in breast cancer survivors. Sixty-one breast cancer survivors participated in a self-reporting online study, which consisted of the Posttraumatic Growth Inventory, General Humility Scale, Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale, Gratitude Questionnaire, and STI. Results indicated that spiritual transcendence was positively linked to personal growth following a traumatic event such as breast cancer.²¹⁷ This research suggested that spiritual transcendence played at least some role in post-traumatic growth.

The STI was also used to study spiritual awareness in meditation practices. Examining hiker's experience of God, a pretest/posttest study hypothesized that transcendence would be associated with solitude and reflection. Fifteen adult hikers answered a questionnaire consisting of the STI, Spiritual Assessment Inventory and backpacking experience questions before participating in a two week backpacking course. Following the treatment, additional data were collected. A significant association was found in spiritual awareness and transcendence through solitude and reflection, with participants feeling closer to God.²¹⁸ The study suggested that the practice of meditation through outdoor adventure and solitude aided in spiritual transcendence.

²¹⁶ Marie Good & Teena Willoughby. "Institutional and Personal Spirituality/Religiosity and Psychosocial Adjustment in Adolescence: Concurrent and Longitudinal Associations." *Youth Adolescence*, 43 (2014): 757.

²¹⁷ Dorianna Eaves. "Growing After Survival: Resilience, Humility, Gratitude, and Spiritual Transcendence among Breast Cancer Survivors" (Doctoral Dissertation, Regent University, 2018).

²¹⁸ Ben Zequeira-Russell. "Wilderness and Spirituality: Hiker's Experience of God in the Backcountry," (Doctoral Dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, 2002).

The STI was chosen for this study due to the cognitive, affective, motivational, and transcendent facets that are considered within the overall STI score.²¹⁹ The measured components correspond with the components of spiritual edification supported in scripture²²⁰ and holistic health perspectives.²²¹ Thus, the STI was a suitable instrument for the present study. In addition, given the correlation between the STI and emotion, positive and negative emotion scores at the pretest was included as covariates.²²²

Summary

There is a litany of research suggesting a link between music and lyrics as they are concerned with thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, as well as a wealth of theological positions on the salience of lyrics positions in discipleship and spiritual edification within church congregations. However, despite the existing literature, more information is needed to determine the effects of worship lyrics on the spiritual edification of Christian worshipers. To date, there is no research exploring the impact of lyrical approach within a worship song on an individual's spiritual edification. The current study aimed to address this gap in the literature by testing the impact of emotional, theological, and integrated lyrics on spiritual transcendence within a sample of university students attending a large, private, faith-based university.

²¹⁹ Seidlitz, 441.

²²⁰ Romans 12:1-2

²²¹ Robitschek, 183.

²²² David Watson & Lee Anna Clark. "Development and Validation of Brief Measures of Positive and Negative Affect: The PANAS Scales." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 54, 6 (1988): 1063.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Due to the assumed nature of the lasting effects of music on the spiritual life, the lack of quantitative studies within this field, and the varied doxology presently influencing worship praxeology, it is important to empirically analyze the impact of worship lyrics on the life of the worshiper. The purpose of this quasi-experimental study was to examine the link between worship lyrics, in general, as they relate to spiritual transcendence, as well as the differences among emotional, theological, and integrated lyrics on the spiritual transcendence of the evangelical believer. This chapter explains the methodology used to conduct the study, including the research design, setting, participants, instrumentation, procedures, and methods for data analysis, all in effort to answer the research questions.

Design

A quasi-experimental pretest/posttest study was conducted to determine if spiritual transcendence was elevated according to general worship lyrics. The research design was chosen due to non-random group assignment, as participants were pre-assigned to groups based on class section.²²³

Research Questions and Hypothesis

The research question for this study was:

RQ1: Does exposure to research lyrics, regardless of type, predict a change in spiritual transcendence from pretest to posttest?

²²³ Rebecca Warner. *Applied Statistics: From Bivariate Through Multivariate Techniques*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications (2013): 688-689.

RQ2: Does type of research lyric influence spiritual transcendence, after controlling for pretest spiritual transcendence scores, positive emotion, and negative emotion?

The hypotheses for this study were:

H1: There will be a statistically significant difference in the impact of exposure to lyrics on posttest STI scores.

H2: Spiritual transcendence will be highest in the integrated lyric group, as compared to the theological and emotion only lyric groups, after controlling for pretest STI scores and positive and negative emotion ratings.

Participants

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling. Participants ($N = 70$) in this study were students within two sections of the same freshman level worship class. The study included 45 (64.3%) female and 25 (35.7%) male participants with ages ranging from 18-23 ($M=19.9$, $SD=1.27$), who were in the beginning stages of their degree programs. Participants were divided into lyric groups based on class section. Group 1 (emotional lyrics) participants were comprised of the first class section, with 24 members. Groups 2 (theological lyrics) and 3 (integrated lyrics) were comprised of the second, larger class section which was randomly divided by the professor, with 26 participants in group 2 and 33 participants in group 3. Regarding religious denomination, the participants demographics identified as 38.6% Non-Denominational, 34.3% Baptist, 17.1% Pentecostal, 7.1% other Protestant, and 2.9% Catholic. See Table 1 for a summary of these demographics. After preliminary data screening was conducted, results from 10 participants were removed due to incomplete data. Three additional cases were removed for inattentive responses, which was defined as giving the same answer

more than 10 times consecutively.²²⁴ The final sample consisted of 70 participants; group 1 (emotional lyrics) was comprised of 18 members, group 2 (theological lyrics) was comprised of 23 members, and group 3 (integrated lyrics) was comprised of 29 members.

Table 1: Sample Demographics

Gender	Number	Percent
Male	25	35.7
Female	45	64.3
Denomination		
Non-Denominational	27	38.6
Baptist	24	34.3
Pentecostal	12	17.1
Other Protestant	5	7.1
Catholic	2	2.9

Setting

The site for this study was a classroom within a large, private, faith-based university located in the mid-Atlantic United States. Upon entrance into the classroom, participants were greeted, provided with a test booklet and pen, and asked to be seated in the lecture style classroom. The site was familiar to participants, as each frequented the room for tri-weekly seminars given by a professor other than the researcher. A PowerPoint presentation slide was displayed on the screen, requesting that participants be seated and wait further instruction.

Procedure

Prior to the study, university permission was secured in order to conduct the experiment. The Institution Review Board (IRB) approved the quasi-experimental design, study procedures, and all required documents (e.g., informed consent) (see Appendix A). Additionally, permission

²²⁴ John A. Johnson. "Ascertaining the Validity of Individual Protocols from Web-Based Personality Inventories." *Journal of Research in Personality*, 39, no.1 (2005): 103-129.

from the Chair of Worship Studies was obtained in order to conduct the experiment on School of Music students within a classroom setting. Permission was also obtained from the thesis chair.

Recruitment

A PowerPoint slide was presented to the targeted class sections. Two weeks prior the study participants confirmed their interest in the study with the class professor, who notified the researcher. On the day of the test, participants formally agreed to partake in the study, reading and passively approving the consent form by continuing on to the questionnaire portion or choosing not to participate in the study and leaving the room. Students were not required to participate and were given the option to opt out of the experiment. As the design of the experiment required anonymity, signatures were not included on the letter of consent. Participants then completed a demographics survey including their gender, age, religious denomination, and number of years considered to be an evangelical Christian (if applicable).

Testing Materials

Song Lyrics

Several weeks prior to the experiment, three songs were written to serve as the independent variables within the three-group research design. To control for outside factors such as familiarity or past experience with a song, new or unknown songs were prerequisite to the study. Using an unfamiliar integrated-lyric song as a base, two more songs were written, line by line, one to display emotional lyrics and one to display theological lyrics. For the purposes of this study, emotional lyrics were defined and limited to a personal point of view, intimate or romantic language in nature, and descriptors of feelings. Theological lyrics were defined as demonstrating a corporate point of view, descriptions of the Trinity, and allusions to scripture and the Gospel. Integrated lyrics were considered to have a balance of both emotional and

theological components, with the song displaying an equal number of emotional and theological lines, along with a personal point of view, as well as references to feelings, the work of the Trinity and allusions to scripture. The base, or integrated song, “I Bow to the King”, was written by Nicole Miller and Naoto Barret (see Appendix B). The subsequent lyrics for the emotional song, “My Heart Bows to the King” and the theological song, “We Gladly Bow to Thee” were written by the aforementioned authors, along with thesis candidate, Hanna Byrd and thesis chair, Mindy Damon. Once all three lyric sets were completed, they were reviewed by two songwriting professors to verify the lyric approach as emotional, theological, and integrated (see Appendix C). It was also necessary for the songs to control for melody, which resulted in using the same musical arrangement for each version of the song.

After the development of the lyrics, each song was recorded using a Solid State Logic Duality Delta large format studio mixing console and a Myrinx VM1 microphone. A previously recorded studio track was utilized for the musical arrangement and the same vocalist was used to record all three lyric versions of the song. The ending of each line was held for the same rhythmic time and vocal runs were identical and limited to the ending of the 5th, 16th, 17th, and 27th lines of all three songs. To control for consistent volume among the songs, the gain on each lyric section was compared and analyzed by the studio technician. The verses of all songs reached a gain of -24, the first and third choruses reached -25, the second and fourth choruses reached -20, the first two lines of the bridge reached -24, and the last two lines of the bridge reached -17. The songs were then mixed and mastered by the same technician, ensuring for consistency among the versions.

Spiritual Transcendence Index

The Spiritual Transcendence Index (STI) is an eight-item index designed to measure spiritual transcendence defined as “a perceived experience of the sacred that affects one’s self concept, feelings, goals, and ability to transcend one’s difficulties.”²²⁵ Developed in 2002, the STI has shown internal validity and consistency with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .90 to .97.²²⁶ Additional studies in 2018 supported the revision from an original 6-category response version to an updated 4-category response version, condensing three categories of disagreement into one category.²²⁷ The revised STI included 8 Likert-type statements on a scale of 1 (disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree), with questions such as “My Spirituality gives me a feeling of fulfillment” and “God helps me to rise above my immediate circumstances.”²²⁸ To score, participant answers were totaled and averaged with a possible range of scores from 1 to 4. Higher scores indicated higher levels of spiritual transcendence, while lower scores indicate a lesser level of spiritual transcendence.²²⁹ The STI was chosen as it measures participant perceptions of cognitive, affective, motivational, and transcendent components of spirituality, as opposed to religious behaviors (see Appendix D).²³⁰

Positive and Negative Affect Scales

The Positive and Negative Affect Scales (PANAS) was utilized as a control variable in the current study. The PANAS is a brief, well-known measure of affect, consisting of 20 Likert-

²²⁵ Seidlitz, 22.

²²⁶ Ibid.

²²⁷ Alexis Abernethy & Seong-Hyeon Kim. “The Spiritual Transcendence Index: An Item Response Theory Analysis.” *The International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 28, 4 (2018): 240-256.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Seidlitz, 23.

²³⁰ Ibid.

type questions, with 10 questions centering on positive affect and 10 questions centering on negative affect.²³¹ Participants indicated their level of feeling based on a scale of 1 (Very Slightly Agree or Not at All) to 5 (Extremely Agree).²³² Sample emotions included, “Interested”, “Distressed”, “Excited”, and “Upset.”²³³ The positive affect scores were determined by totaling responses from items 1, 3, 5, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 17 and 19, while negative affect scores were determined by totaling items 2, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 13, 15, 18, and 20.²³⁴ Scores for both scales can range from 10-50. Higher positive affect scores represent higher levels of positive affect while lower negative affect scores represent lower levels of negative affect.²³⁵ The PANAS has been shown to be “highly internally consistent, largely uncorrelated, and stable at appropriate levels over a two-month time period” (see Appendix E).²³⁶

Testing

Test booklets and corresponding PowerPoint instructions were created for all three groups. With the exception of the lyric intervention, the booklets and PowerPoint were identical in nature. Each packet was ordered to include a consent form, demographic survey, the PANAS, the STI, intervention lyrics, a second PANAS, and a second STI. Following the posttest, participants were also given space to write comments about the song, if they chose to do so. The posttest PANAS and open-ended comments were collected to address additional research questions beyond the scope of the current study.

²³¹ Watson & Clark, 1063.

²³² Ibid.

²³³ Ibid.

²³⁴ Ibid.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

All three groups were administered the same testing procedure, with the exception of the song lyrics presented (i.e., the treatment). The proctor instructed participants to open the test booklet and read the consent form. After reading the consent form, participants were given the opportunity to passively consent to the experience or choose not to participate and leave the room. The proctor directed participants to complete the demographic questionnaire before asking participants to answer the PANAS and STI. Following these instruments, the proctor informed participants that they would now hear a worship song. Group 1 ($n = 24$) listened to emotional lyrics, group 2 ($n = 26$) listened to theological lyrics, and group 3 ($n = 33$) listened to integrated lyrics. The songs were played from the proctor's computer, at the same volume, utilizing the classroom speakers. Participants also received a printed copy of the lyrics to the song for which they were listening. At the conclusion of the song, the proctor directed participants to complete the PANAS and STI again. Then, the proctor referenced a final page of the test packet, allowing for participants to comment on the lyrics, if they would like to do so. Finally, the test booklets were collected and the proctor thanked and dismissed the participants.

Data Analysis

Data from the test packets were transferred to an electronic file using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and stored on a laptop with a secure password within a locked office. All analyses were conducted using SPSS 24.0. Initially, a paired t-test was conducted to assess whether exposure to worship lyrics (regardless of type) predicted a change in spiritual transcendence from pretest to posttest. Next, an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was run to test whether the type of lyrics impacted spiritual transcendence scores, controlling with positive emotion, negative emotion, and spiritual transcendence scores at the pretest. Specifically, the PANAS (positive and negative subscales) and STI pretest scores were included

in the analysis, being treated as covariates to act as error variance suppressors²³⁷. Post hoc analyses were run to assess STI posttest differences across multiple lyric groups.²³⁸

²³⁷ Warner, 691.

²³⁸ Ibid, 700.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

Introduction

This chapter describes the analyses conducted to test the hypotheses that (a) there will be a statistically significant difference in the impact of exposure to lyrics on posttest STI scores and (b) spiritual transcendence will be highest in the integrated lyric group, as compared to the theological and emotion only lyrics groups, after controlling for pretest STI scores and positive and negative emotion ratings. It was specifically predicted that integrated lyrics would have the strongest impact on spiritual edification. This chapter defines the sample and reports the descriptive statistics for the variables included in this study. The findings are presented and the results are discussed.

Results

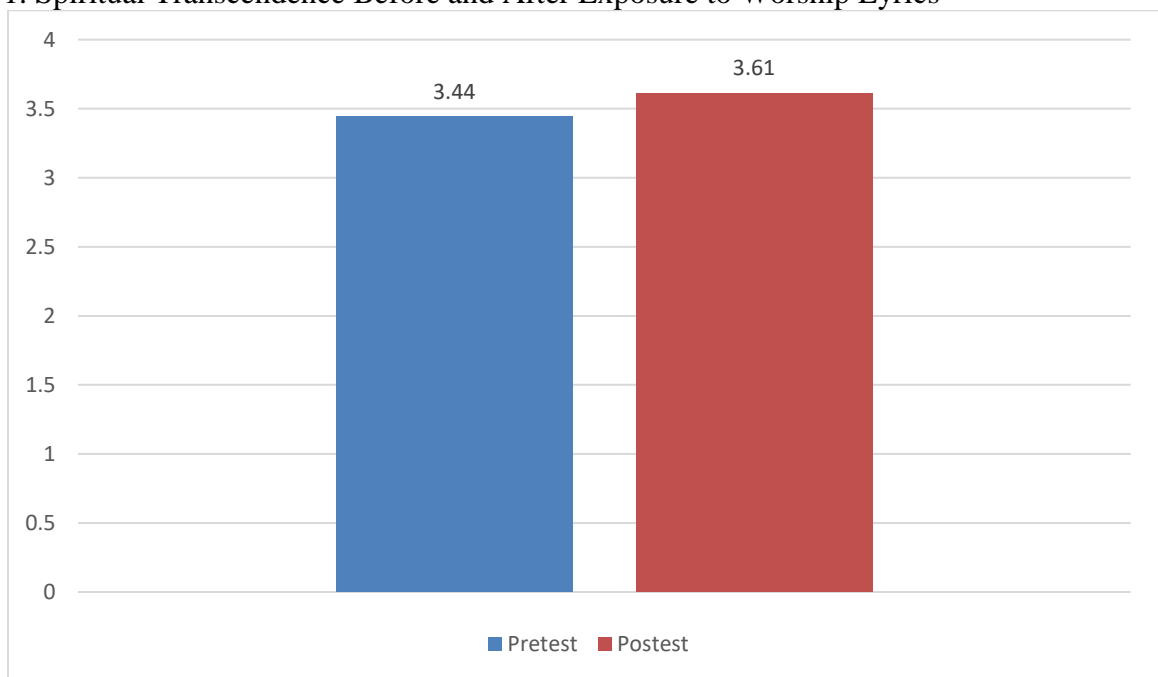
A quasi-experimental study was conducted to assess whether generalized worship lyrics, as well as three different lyric approaches, produced statistically significant differences in spiritual transcendence. Group 1 listened to emotionally-driven lyrics, Group 2 listened to theologically-driven lyrics, and Group 3 listened to integrated lyrics (see Table 2 for a breakdown of the number of participants in each group). The type of lyrics presented to each group served as the independent variable, while the posttest STI scores served as the dependent variable.

Table 2: Lyric Groups

Group	Number	Percent
Emotional	18	25.7
Theological	23	32.9
Integrated	29	41.4

RQ1: Does exposure to research lyrics, regardless of type, predict a change in spiritual transcendence from pretest to posttest? A paired t-test was used to determine if personal spiritual edification changed from the pretest to posttest after exposure to worship lyrics. There was a significant difference in pretest STI scores ($M = 3.44, SD = .48$) and posttest STI scores ($M = 3.61, SD = .42$); $t(69) = -6.51, p = .001$, indicating that exposure to worship lyrics did yield higher spiritual edification scores at the posttest (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. Spiritual Transcendence Before and After Exposure to Worship Lyrics



RQ2: Does type of research lyric influence spiritual transcendence, after controlling for pretest spiritual transcendence scores, positive emotion, and negative emotion? An Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted to determine a statistically significant difference between emotional, theological, and integrated lyrics approaches on spiritual transcendence according to the STI while controlling for positive and negative emotions according to the PANAS and pretest scores from the STI.

The descriptive statistics, in Table 3, present the mean STI posttest score, standard deviation, and number of participants for the different worship lyric groups. These values did not include any adjustments made by the use of a covariate in the analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Dependent Variable:			
Lyric Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Emotional	3.5486	0.41599	18
Theological	3.5380	0.39246	23
Integrated	3.6983	0.44259	29
Total	3.6071	0.42097	70

Levene’s Test of Equality of Error Variances was used to test the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups with a resulting in non-significance ($F(2,67) = .23, p = .792$), indicating that the assumption was not violated.

To assess the assumption of homogeneity of regression slopes (i.e., interaction between treatment and covariate) a preliminary ANCOVA was run using SPSS GLM with a custom model that included and $X_{c1} \times A$, $X_{c2} \times A$, and $X_{c3} \times A$ interaction terms. One interaction was statistically significant (STI pretest ($X_{c1} \times A$): $F(2,11) = 5.81, p = .005$; PANAS Positive Score ($X_{c2} \times A$): $F(2,11) = .859, p = .429$; PANAS Negative Score ($X_{c3} \times A$): $F(2,11) = 1.743, p = .184$) indicating a violation of the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption (see Table 4).

Table 4: Preliminary ANCOVA Results

Dependent Variable: Source	STI-Total-Post Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10.488	11	0.953	31.790	0.000
Intercept	0.112	1	0.112	3.724	0.059
Group * STIPreTot (X_{c1})	0.349	2	0.174	5.813	0.005
Group * PanasPos (X_{c2})	0.052	2	0.026	0.859	0.429
Group * PanasNeg (X_{c3})	0.105	2	0.052	1.743	0.184
Group	0.333	2	0.166	5.548	0.006
STIPreTot	6.480	1	6.480	216.069	0.000
PanasPos	0.041	1	0.041	1.381	0.245
PanasNeg	0.001	1	0.001	0.023	0.880
Error	1.740	58	0.030		
Total	923.031	70			
Corrected Total	12.228	69			

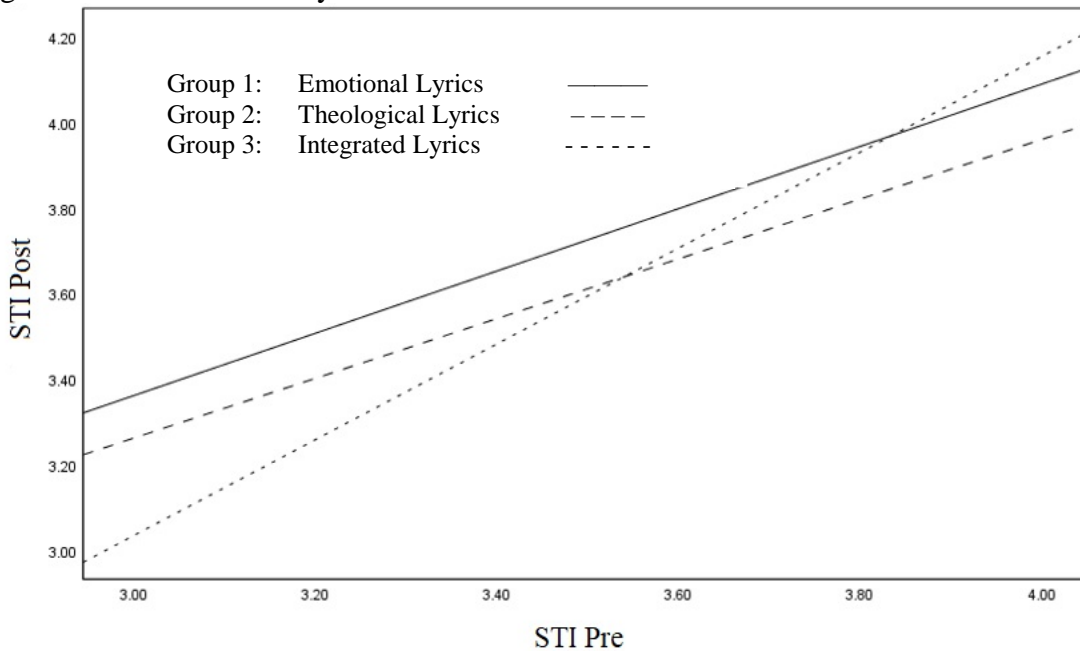
a. R Squared = .858 (Adjusted R Squared = .831)

Due to the violation of the homogeneity of regression slopes found in X_{c1} , a more appropriate analysis of the study would include $X_{c1} \times A$ as a part of analysis.²³⁹ The interaction was included in the analysis and probed at the 16th, 50th, and 84th percentiles of spiritual transcendence pretest (X_{c1}) for each of the independent groups (see Figure 2).²⁴⁰

²³⁹ Barbara G. Tabachnick & Linda S. Fidell. *Using Multivariate Statistics*. Boston: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon, 2019.

²⁴⁰ Andrew F. Hayes. *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. Second ed. New York: The Guilford Press, 2018.

Figure 2. Moderation Analysis



The significant covariate by dependent variable interaction indicated the relationship between the STI pretest covariate and STI posttest dependent variable was stronger for the Integrated Lyrics group than the other two experimental conditions. A potential cause for the heterogeneity could be the lack of group randomization, as a convenience sample of existing class groups was utilized. Additional histograms of the integrated group pretest results were more negatively skewed in comparison to those of the theological and emotional groups. Yet the outliers in the integrated pretest results were also found in the integrated posttest results, suggesting that the treatment was still meaningful, though there was a wider range of scores within the integrated group.

An ANCOVA was used to determine whether the lyric interventions were statistically significantly different, having adjusted for the covariates of positive emotion, negative emotion, and STI scores at the pretest. The overall effect of the worship lyrics, in general, was statistically significant ($F(2,62) = 4.998, p = .01$). See Table 5 for a full summary of the ANCOVA results.

Table 5. ANCOVA Results

Dependent Variable: STI-Total-Post					
Source	Sum of Squares	df	MS	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	10.345 ^a	7	1.478	48.683	0.000
Intercept	0.196	1	0.196	6.451	0.014
Group * STIPreTot	0.269	2	0.135	4.437	0.016
Group	0.303	2	0.152	4.998	0.010
STIPreTot	6.913	1	6.913	227.713	0.000
PanasPos	0.033	1	0.033	1.100	0.298
PanasNeg	0.003	1	0.003	0.101	0.752
Error	1.882	62	0.030		
Total	923.031	70			
Corrected Total	12.228	69			

a. R Squared = .846 (Adjusted R Squared = .829)

Post hoc analyses with a Bonferonni correction were utilized to test for differences among the three groups of lyric approaches. Marginal means for each group are presented in Table 6. Pairwise comparisons revealed that there was no significant difference in spiritual edification between emotional and theological lyric groups ($p = 1$). There was also no significant difference in spiritual edification between theological and integrated lyric groups ($p = .144$). However, there was a significant difference in spiritual edification between the integrated and emotional lyric groups ($p = .029$), such that STI posttest scores were higher in the integrated. See Table 7 and Figure 3 for a summary of the post hoc analyses.

Table 6. Estimated Marginal Means

	Lyric Group	Unadjusted	Adjusted	N
Group 1	Emotional	3.55	3.53	18
Group 2	Theological	3.54	3.58	23
Group 3	Integrated	3.61	3.68	29

Covariates appearing in the model are evaluated at the following values: STI-Total-Pre = 3.4393, PANAS-Positive = 30.1000, PANAS-Negative = 16.5143.

Table 7. Post hoc Analyses Summary

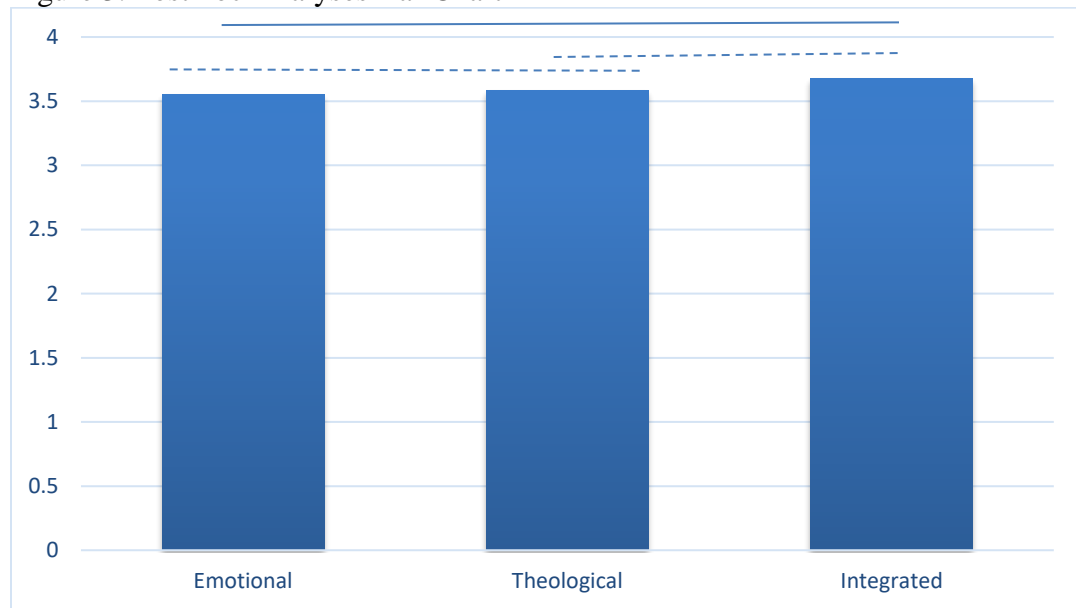
(I) Lyric Group		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig. ^b	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Emotional	Theological	-.042	0.058	1.000	-0.186	0.101
	Integrated	-.147*	0.055	0.029	-0.283	-0.011
Theological	Emotional	.042	0.058	1.000	-0.101	0.186
	Integrated	-.105	0.052	0.144	-0.232	0.023
Integrated	Emotional	.147*	0.055	0.029	0.011	0.283
	Theological	.105	0.052	0.144	-0.023	0.232

Based on estimated marginal means

*. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

b. Adjustment for multiple comparisons: Bonferroni.

Figure 3. Post hoc Analyses Bar Chart



— The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

- - - The mean difference is not significant ($p > .05$).

Summary

A quasi-experiment was conducted to compare the effectiveness of lyric approach on spiritual edification. A paired t-test demonstrated support for hypothesis 1, showing that worship lyrics, in general, increased spiritual edification ($p = .001$). Prior to testing hypothesis 2, Levene's test was carried out and the assumption of homogeneity of variance was met.

However, a preliminary ANCOVA revealed a violation of the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption. Given this violation, results should be interpreted cautiously. An ANCOVA was run to test hypothesis 2, which revealed a significant difference in mean spiritual edification between the lyric groups, controlling for pretest spiritual edification and emotion (both positive and negative). Hypothesis 2 was partially supported, as the integrated lyric group had higher spiritual edification scores than the emotional lyric group ($p = .029$); however, the integrated lyric group did not differ from the theological lyric group ($p = .14$).

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

Introduction

This chapter will present a brief summary of the study, purpose, and procedure. Findings are discussed and related to prior research. This chapter also describes the limitations of the study and offers recommendations for possible directions in future research. Finally, chapter 5 concludes with the implications this study may have for Christian individuals, songwriters, and worship leaders.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this study was to examine the influence of modern Christian worship lyric approaches within song on spiritual edification. The pretest/posttest design results indicated that exposure to worship lyrics in general (regardless of lyrical approach) yielded significant differences in spiritual transcendence from pretest to posttest. These results were consistent with Seidlitz's²⁴¹ and Piedmont's²⁴² studies on transcendence, which displayed healthy emotional, mental, and behavioral edification when engaging with religious and spiritual practices. The findings were also consistent with psychological studies regarding the positive effects of lyrics on affirmative feelings,²⁴³ thoughts,²⁴⁴ and behaviors.²⁴⁵ Moreover, these findings corroborated what the scriptures confirmed: The worship of God produces spiritual edification in the life of the believer.²⁴⁶

²⁴¹ Seidlitz, 441.

²⁴² Piedmont, 116.

²⁴³ Ransom, 2.

²⁴⁴ Bohm, 282.

²⁴⁵ Barongan, 195.

²⁴⁶ Rom. 12:1-2

This study also explored the role of emotive, theological and integrated lyrics on spiritual edification. Using the PANAS and STI pretest scores as covariates, three groups were used to test whether emotionally-driven, theologically-driven, or integrated worship lyrics had more of an impact on spiritual transcendence. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in spiritual transcendence according to worship lyrics, specifically finding a significant difference between emotionally driven and integrated driven lyric approaches, such that the group exposed to integrated lyrics scored higher on spiritual transcendence than the group exposed to emotional lyrics. The results suggested the combined engagement of the heart and the mind produced higher levels of transcendence, which confirmed Seidlitz's view that these components act in an interdependent manner.²⁴⁷ These findings also supported the theological stance that worship lyrics serve as a theological training while also facilitating a personal encounter with God.²⁴⁸ Further, Segler's view, that "[w]orship and theology together combine to motivate a strong Christian faith and to empower a fruitful Christian life,"²⁴⁹ was also supported. The results, likewise, bolstered the views of Ward²⁵⁰ and the Reinstra's,²⁵¹ suggesting that an overall "balanced diet" of worship lyrics is beneficial to believers. Additionally, the results confirmed the importance of theological lyrics which recognize the Trinity,²⁵² preach the Gospel,²⁵³ and allude to Scripture.²⁵⁴

²⁴⁷ Seidlitz, 441.

²⁴⁸ Frame, 1-2

²⁴⁹ Segler, 58.

²⁵⁰ Ward, 209-210.

²⁵¹ Reinstra & Reinstra, 108.

²⁵² Ruth, 29.

²⁵³ Dawn, 109.

²⁵⁴ Witvliet, 170.

However, the findings were only partially consistent with the lyric positions of scholars advocating for emotion-based lyrics. While proponents of emotional lyrics purported the ability of lyrics to aid in internalizing the message and engaging with God, the results suggested that an integrated or theological approach provided more capacity for internalizing the message both mentally and emotionally. Further, the results advocated that integrated and theological lyrics produced higher levels of transcendence than the emotional lyrics, which was in contrast to the emotional lyric stance of encountering God through emotional words.²⁵⁵ Moreover, these findings were consistent with previous research demonstrating that music and lyrics can impact various outcomes related to emotion,²⁵⁶ behavior,²⁵⁷ and cognition.²⁵⁸

Finally, the results partially corroborated the historical practices of the Christian church. Though various generations of the church differed greatly on the subject of lyric content, the findings provided a moderate backing for those who advocated for theology and those who advocated for emotion. The biblical example of David using emotional worship words²⁵⁹ was partially supported through the integrated lyric results, while the teachings of the Apostle Paul²⁶⁰ were validated through the integrated and theological lyric results. Martin Luther's supposition on lyrics communicating a relationship with God, as well as John Calvin's argument²⁶¹ for theologically based lyrics were both supported through the significance of the integrated approach.

²⁵⁵ Koenig, 153 & Park, 69.

²⁵⁶ Gebhardt, 61.

²⁵⁷ Greitmeyer, 190.

²⁵⁸ McFerran, Hense, Koike & Rickwood, 567.

²⁵⁹ Noland, 206.

²⁶⁰ Colossians 3:16

²⁶¹ Lemke, 67-69.

Limitations

As with any research study, some limitations were unavoidable. In order to control for participants having a previous experience with or perception of the lyrics of a worship song, it was necessary to use songs that were unknown to the participants. However, within a worshipping congregation, the songs are often familiar to congregants, which might allow for continued reflection and edification long after the song is sung. Yet, familiar lyrics could also reduce the impact of edification if the congregant was tired of singing the song or associated the song with a bad memory. Thus, unknown songs, while a limitation, were utilized for the study.

Another limitation to the study was the unusual environment of the experiment. The room was well lit and lacking a stage. The participants remained seated throughout the experiment, and there was no live performance of the song. These measures were necessary to control for the study of lyrics alone. However, evangelical believers would likely engage in worship services that include some type of lighting and platform. Further, congregants would typically engage in the songs by standing and singing along with a live musical performance.

Another possible limitation was that the proctor of the treatment also served as the primary researcher for this study and was aware of the various conditions and potential effects. The researcher sought to ensure accuracy and transparency throughout the procedure and analysis. While all possible actions were taken to reduce potential bias, it is not possible to rule out observer effects or the possibility that the researcher could have elicited responses from the participants. Moreover, the lack of a “no lyrics” control group made it impossible to test for change in spiritual edification that might be due to simply being exposed to music. Further, although the lyrics were reviewed by two songwriting professors, there was no manipulation check to verify that the participants were able to accurately identify the type of lyric presented in

the song they heard. Therefore, it is possible that another confound in the current study might be that the participants may not have accurately interpreted the lyrics.

Additionally, the convenience sample of existing classroom groups (i.e., lack of random assignment) may have resulted in non-equivalent groups. This limitation provided the potential for meaningful differences that could impact that scores. In attempt to control for differences, the pretest scores from the STI, as well as the positive and negative subscales from the PANAS were included in the ANCOVA. Yet, a violation of the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption was evidenced. This violation limits the conclusions that can be drawn from the current study.

The nature of the pretest/posttest design was also a limitation. This type of design provided the possibility of sensitizing the participants as they repeat the same measures, the STI and PANAS, within a 20-minute time frame. When completing the posttest, it could have been possible for participants to discern the nature of the study or recall previous responses from the pretest.²⁶²

Another limitation to the study, which is common among spiritually-related research, was that of ceiling effects.²⁶³ This study sought to evaluate evangelical believers, whose identification as such may correlate with higher levels of spirituality than those who do not identify as such. The STI was selected, in part, due to the effectiveness of the test with religious populations. However, in the pretest measures of this study, 87% ($n = 61$) of participants scored a 3 on the STI scale of 1 to 4. As the highest possible score for the posttest was a 4 out of 4, the

²⁶² Warner, 998.

²⁶³ Abernathy, 240.

measure did not have substantial variability within this population. The high pretest scores across all three lyric groups suggest a limitation of the measure.

Finally, as this study is one of the first of its kind, the findings should be viewed as preliminary. Additional testing is needed to corroborate the results. Replication studies are necessary to gain a fuller picture of the impact of worship lyrics on spiritual edification.

Recommendations for Future Study

Given the procedures, limitations, and findings from this study, a primary recommendation for future study is the continued experimentation of emotionally, theologically, and integrated driven worship lyrics on spiritual edification, within other age groups and demographics. The initial study should be replicated in order to see the edification benefits or consequences of lyric content, among to various generations, cultures, denominations, and musical skill.

Another practical study, which could be derived from the limitations, is the possibility of using familiar worship songs and song leaders within the experiment. These variables could more closely mirror a congregational worship setting. Similarly, a study could be conducted using song sets of emotional, theological, or integrated songs. As Christian worship services often incorporate the use of the song set within weekly services, another study could be conducted on the spiritual edification derived from a combination of multiple songs. Additional experiments could include numerous variables of worship sets that are strictly dedicated to one lyric approach or provide a mix of emotional only songs combined theological only songs. A study on the worship leader's theological or emotional verbal transitions could also be researched.

A study could also be conducted on emotionally-driven and theologically-driven lyrics as they pertain to the “God subscale” and “Spirit subscale” within the STI.²⁶⁴ The present study utilized the overall scale, though further research may aid in indicating how lyric approach intersects with more specific aspects of spiritual edification. This analysis would be helpful in determining the importance of cognitive and affective components in relation to a worshiper’s understanding of God, as well as spiritual experiences.

Finally, there is a need to conduct comparable studies that focus on other aspects of varied worship stances, specifically within worship lyrics. While this study employed particular definitions of emotional, theological, and integrated lyrics, scholars subscribe to many lyric positions, warranting further study. Future research could analyze peripheral or not biblically fundamental lyrics and the implications on spiritual edification, as these lyrics often portray a partial truth but do not communicate balanced theology.²⁶⁵ A similar study could be conducted on the differences between theological lyrics and shallow lyrics, which provide a repetitive, meditative concept, as opposed to theological depth.²⁶⁶ Further, research with a control group exposed to only the music (i.e., no worship lyrics) would be beneficial for ruling out the potential benefit of listening to music itself.

Implications for Practice

Although the findings should be interpreted with caution in light of the limitations, the preliminary outcomes of this study provide practical implications for individual Christian worshipers, worship leaders, and songwriters. Within private worship, individuals can make an evaluation of their overall “diet” of emotional, theological, and integrated driven worship songs,

²⁶⁴ Seidlitz, 443.

²⁶⁵ Miller, 63.

²⁶⁶ Ibid, 64.

while examining current spiritual emotions and mindset. Understanding that songs which provide a Gospel message and characteristics of the Trinity, combined with the message of a relational God, can uplift the mind, emotions, spirit, and actions. When the individual worshiper is seeking spiritual edification, he or she can utilize integrated and theological worship songs as a means of meditation.

Worship leaders can also benefit from the inferences of the study, within their personal doxology, as well as within corporate praxeology. The current study supports biblical and historical assertions of blended lyric songs, which could help worship leaders influence the theological convictions of their church in regards to worship lyrics. Worship leaders can implement this research into weekly services, analyzing set lists to ensure that there is emotionally and theologically integrated content within the service. If a particular worship song is lacking in either the relational or theological content, worship leaders can include another song which can compensate for the one-sided lyrics of the first song. Alternatively, the worship leader can provide a verbal transition prior to the singing of the song, in order to provide a relational contextualization for a strictly theological song or a theological framework for a primarily emotional song.

Further, Christian songwriters can find value in the results of this study, as they seek to write new music for the evangelical community to sing. In developing ideas for song topics, writers can work towards the goal a personal text within a theological framework. By making relational application to theology, songwriters can create songs that minister both to the minds and hearts of those who hear. Further, songwriters can apply these results to the revising process of their songs, reviewing initial texts and making changes to safeguard for accurate theology that can be applied to emotional, physical, and spiritual circumstances.

Conclusion

Due to the influence modern Christian worship music can have on the spiritual lives of the Judeo-Christian worshipping community, it is important for individual believers, worship leaders, and songwriters to identify the most beneficial lyrics for which to sing. Though varied theological and historical positions exist, the field of worship is lacking in quantitative studies of worship-related matters. The aim of this study was to determine whether worship lyrics provide spiritual edification within the lives of believers and to assess which types of lyrics elicit higher levels of spiritual transcendence. Results indicated that experiencing worship lyrics led to higher levels of spiritual edification. Moreover, follow-up analyses revealed that the theologically-driven and integrated lyric groups did not differ on spiritual transcendence scores, and the theologically-driven and emotionally-driven lyric groups did not differ on spiritual transcendence scores. However, the group experiencing integrated lyrics reported higher levels of spiritual transcendence than the group experiencing emotionally-driven lyrics. While more research is needed to replicate these findings and the violation of the homogeneity of regression slopes assumption should be taken into consideration, these preliminary outcomes suggest that worship music that employs both relationally- and theologically-driven lyrical content can play a significant role within the spiritual edification of believers, challenging individuals, worship leaders, and songwriters to consider the overall lyric composition within modern Christian worship music and practice.

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Appendix A: IRB Approval

September 19, 2018

Hanna Byrd

IRB Exemption 3453.091918: The Impact of Lyric Choices on Spiritual Edification

Dear Hanna Byrd,

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application in accordance with the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulations and finds your study to be exempt from further IRB review. This means you may begin your research with the data safeguarding methods mentioned in your approved application, and no further IRB oversight is required.

Your study falls under exemption category 46.101(b)(2), which identifies specific situations in which human participants research is exempt from the policy set forth in 45 CFR 46:101(b):

(2) Research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: (i) information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and (ii) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

Please note that this exemption only applies to your current research application, and any changes to your protocol must be reported to the Liberty IRB for verification of continued exemption status. You may report these changes by submitting a change in protocol form or a new application to the IRB and referencing the above IRB Exemption number.

If you have any questions about this exemption or need assistance in determining whether possible changes to your protocol would change your exemption status, please email us at irb@liberty.edu.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP

Administrative Chair of Institutional Research

The Graduate School

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Appendix B: Red Tie Records/Liberty Music Group Permission

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

Lorie,

I'm still working on my thesis and wanted to see if you had an instrumental track for the song "I Bow to The King". If so, I wanted to ask permission to use it as part of my experiment. My plan is to record three versions of the song and play a version for three different groups. Each version would only be played one time for the experiment participants to hear. If you have the track and would consider granting me permission, I would be grateful. I am also willing to pay any necessary fees and add copyright information to the appendices of the thesis for publication. Thanks for your consideration.

Hanna Byrd

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

Hi Hanna – Of course! We would be happy to help with this!

I will request the instrumental track from Nathan and get that to you as soon as possible.

No fees required.

Lorie Marsh

Director of Operations

Red Tie Music/Liberty Music Group

(434) 592-5548



Appendix C: Lyric Approaches

Emotional Lyric Approach	Integrated Lyric Approach	Theological Integrated Approach
Lyrics by: Nicole Miller, Naoto Barrett, Mindy Damon and Hanna Byrd	Lyrics and Music by: Nicole Miller & Naoto Barrett	Lyrics by: Nicole Miller, Naoto Barrett, Mindy Damon and Hanna Byrd
Music by: Nicole Miller & Naoto Barrett		Music by: Nicole Miller & Naoto Barrett
Verse 1:	Verse 1:	Verse 1:
Silence calms this restless heart as You speak	Oh that I might hold my tongue that You may speak	Speak, oh ever-living Word, as we are still
Oh that I may rest my hands and let You be	Oh that I might tie my hands and let You be	Reminding every promise made, You will fulfill
Defender of my mind	The master of my mind	Renewer of our minds
The strength behind my stride	The strength behind my stride	In You, all strength we find
The keeper of my dreams when I lie asleep at night	The keeper of my dreams when I lie asleep at night	You're the Shepherd keeping watch as we asleep at night
Chorus:	Chorus:	Chorus:
My heart bows to the King	I bow to the King	We gladly bow to Thee
Who comes to dwell with me	Who comes to dwell in me	Indwelt so we may be
Who moves my hands to heal	Who guides my hands to heal	A vessel now to heal
And wakes my soul to feel His love	And moves my soul to feel His love	You draw us near to feel Your Love
That whispers in the dark	Who finds me in the dark	Whose light shines in the dark
And tells me I am not what my mind tells me to be	And tells me I am not what my flesh wants me to be	And shows us we are not what our flesh used to be
My heart bows to the King	I bow to the King	We gladly bow to Thee
Verse 2:	Verse 2:	Verse 2:
Let me look through Your eyes so that I can see	Oh that You would be my eyes so I could see	Open up our eyes so that we might see
All the striving You want to work out of me	Oh that I would just be still and let You be	Fix our minds and weary hearts only on Thee
The center of my world	The Shepherd of my soul	Savior of the world
The lover of my soul	The Holder of my world	Ruling from Your throne
Captor of my every thought	Captor of my every thought	Through You we capture every thought
You've always had control	You've always had control	We trust Your Word alone
Bridge:	Bridge:	Bridge:
Holder of my heart, Author of all time	Father of all time, Creator of all life	Beginning and the End, Holy breath of life;
You created me to be a part of Your grand design	The maker of the heavens calls me part of His design	The Creator of the heavens calls us part of His design
The Keeper of my days, the Power that made a way	The Keeper of my days, the Giver of all grace	The keeper of our days, the author of all grace
Your love has freed me from my chains, so now I can say:	The Breaker of my chains Who came and called me from the grave	The victor over death and sin, Who called us from the grave

Appendix D: STI Approval Email

Tuesday, July 31, 2018

Dr. Abernethy,

My name is Hanna Byrd and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University's School of Music. I am in the beginning stages of dissertation and wanted to inquire about the use of the Spiritual Transcendence Index. I am seeking to obtain permission to use the STI and potentially make some small modifications for my study. Please let me know what my next steps would be. Thank you for your assistance.

Hanna Byrd

Wednesday, August 1, 2018

Hanna,

We are pleased that you are using our measure. We ask that researchers send the descriptive data for our future psychometric studies. Let me know how you intend to modify the scale. We have an article accepted for publication where we have recommended the collapsing the disagree categories to a single disagree item so that there are now 4 response categories.

Alexis D. Abernethy, PhD, CGP (Certified Group Psychotherapist), FAGPA
Associate Provost for Faculty Inclusion and Equity
Professor of Psychology
Clinical Psychologist (CA 17059)
Graduate School of Psychology | Fuller Theological Seminary

Friday, August 3, 2018

Thank you, Dr. Abernethy!

I am planning a pretest/posttest experiment, using the STI. The instructions would be modified to ask for the participants "in the moment" responses to the index. As my sample of participants will be evangelicals, I would also include instructions that ask the participants to answer the questions honestly, instead of what they believe the correct answer to be.

Please let me know if you have questions or concerns. Thank you, again!

Hanna Byrd

Friday, August 3, 2018

Hanna,
That sounds fine.

Alexis D. Abernethy, PhD, CGP (Certified Group Psychotherapist), FAGPA
Associate Provost for Faculty Inclusion and Equity
Professor of Psychology
Clinical Psychologist (CA 17059)
Graduate School of Psychology | Fuller Theological Seminary

Appendix E: PANAS Approval



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Account Info

Help



Title: Development and validation of brief measures of positive and negative affect: The PANAS scales.

Author: Watson, David; Clark, Lee Anna; Tellegen, Auke

Publication: Journal of Personality and Social Psychology

Publisher: American Psychological Association

Date: Jun 1, 1988

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