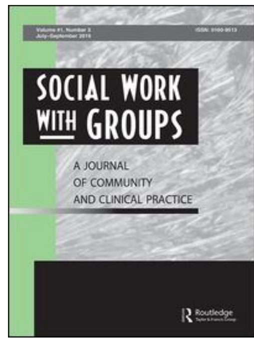

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**Brian L. Kelly & Jonathan Neidorf**

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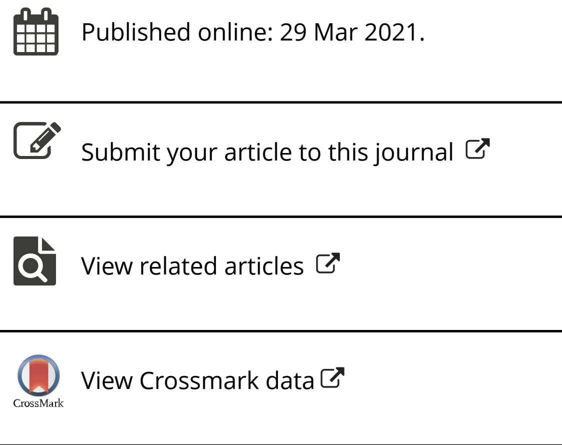

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SOCIAL WORK WITH GROUPS
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# Teaching artists' adaptability in group-based music education residencies

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**ABSTRACT**

Art and music-based activities have played an important role in social work with groups since the origin of the profession. These activities continue to be used, yet less in known about how they are facilitated and led. This International Association for Social Work with Groups SPARC endorsed and funded study responds to this gap in the literature by examining the development and implementation of group-based music education residencies. Classically trained teaching artists (TAs) from a Chicago-based music ensemble led and facilitated a series of residencies at one agency with a drop-in center and a transitional living program for emerging adults experiencing homelessness and other forms of housing instability. Qualitative methods, including observation and focus group interviews, were used to explore the development and implementation of the residencies. Findings suggest TAs' adaptability, which is defined as flexibility, role adaptability, and capacity to meet residency participants where they were, played an important and integral role in the residencies. This study adds to the existing literature on music-based activities in social work with groups and extends our understanding of how these activities are facilitated and led.

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Group facilitation; group leadership; music education; music-based services; group work; social work with groups

## Preface

Brian (lead author) applied for the International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG) SPARC funding and endorsement during the fall 2015 application cycle. As a member of the IASWG board and an assistant professor at the time, he was familiar with the program and eager to apply and advance his work. The project detailed in this article provided the perfect fit between his research interests and the SPARC program. A midsized classical music ensemble wanted to evaluate their efforts in leading and facilitating group-based music education residencies in social service settings, including an agency serving emerging adults experiencing homelessness and other forms of housing instability. Brian had a prior relationship with the agency and felt

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**Note**The International Association for Social Work with Groups (IASWG) SPARC program was established to "spark" IASWG members' innovative practice, education, training and research projects through endorsement and small grants to advance the IASWG mission. This article is part of a special issue devoted to sharing the outcome of various SPARC projects.

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confident that SPARC funding would support attendance and retention by providing stipends for participation in the residencies. Jonathan joined Brian as a graduate research assistant for the project.

This work aligns with the IASWG mission and their commitment to social justice, whereby the organization, "gives particular attention to people systemically disadvantaged by the power differential inherent in oppressive social structures" (IASWG, n.d.). In addition, it builds on the historical precedent of prioritizing activity in social work with groups (Middleman, 1981), advances Lang's (2016) nondeliberative theory, and extends our understanding of how music-based activities are facilitated and led.

## Introduction

Art and music-based activities have played an important role in group work and other forms of community-oriented social work practice throughout the history of the profession. As the work of Hull House cofounders Jane Addams and Ellen Gates Starr demonstrates, settlement house workers brought their curiosity, love, and passion for the arts to the settlements they established and the communities in which they lived and worked (Glowacki, 2004). Together, Addams and Gates Starr fostered a community-focused approach to art and arts engagement, which led to the development of many spaces for art and music-based activities across the Hull House campus. These spaces and activities included visual arts studios and classrooms for painting, sculpture, and woodworking; performance spaces and classrooms for music, theater, and dance; and a short-lived nickelodeon for community youth (Hull House Publishers, 1907, 1910, 1921; Lindstrom, 1999). In 1912, Hull House expanded the use of these types of activities beyond their urban campus to the rural areas of northeastern Illinois at the Bowen Country Club (Hull House Association, n.d.) and in 1963 to southeastern Wisconsin at the Hull House Art and Music Camp (Hull House Publishers, 1969). Similar attitudes and trends toward the use of art and music-based activities occurred at other settlements and their affiliates across the U.S. during this time (Woods & Kennedy, 1922).

These practices lived on as group workers continued to use art and music-based activities throughout the 20th century (Andrews, 2001; Konopka, 1963). As a recent pair of literature reviews demonstrate (Kelly & Doherty, 2016, 2017), art and music-based activities embody the actional, analogic, and artful tenets of Lang's (2016) nondeliberative theory and are grounded in strengths and empowerment-oriented forms of practice. Recent studies explored the use of art-based activities with young people experiencing homelessness by using photovoice methodologies to narrate their experiences of transitional housing services (Curry & Abrams, 2015), and using visual art creation as a means of health promotion and self-care (Schwan et al., 2018). Other recent studies explored the use of music-based activities, such as therapeutic beat making

and lyric writing, to foster empowerment among youth experiencing mental health issues (Travis et al., 2020, 2019), and using music production, education, and appreciation as a means of engaging and fostering the talents, strengths, and interests of young people experiencing homelessness (Kelly, 2017, 2015). While this latter work explores the development of music-based activities and participants' experiences of them, less is known about how music-based activities are facilitated and led.

Social work with groups literature is rich with discussions of the role of the group worker, facilitator, and leader (Rose, 2009; Schwartz, 2006), as well as guidelines and suggestions for when to access facilitation and leadership skills (Gilbert et al., 2005; Toseland & Rivas, 2017). Yet, there is little that speaks to these varying dynamics in group-based music activities and how one might use them. Given the growing body of literature highlighting historical and current uses of art and music-based activities in social group work, it is important to understand the dynamics of facilitating and leading these kinds of groups. This study responds to this gap by examining the development and implementation of group-based music education residencies for emerging adults experiencing homelessness.

## Current study

This article explores one aspect of a multiyear, longitudinal study of the work of Fifth House Ensemble (5HE). Formed in 2005 in the Chicagoland area, 5HE is a midsized, mixed-instrumentation group. Ensemble members are classically trained with varying levels of music education, from undergraduate to doctoral level degrees in composition and performance. Recognized nationally as a leader in audience engagement in the field of chamber music, 5HE also facilitate and lead group-based music education residencies in schools and social service agencies.

5HE residencies are co-designed with partner agencies through a series of planning meetings with 5HE musicians who serve as teaching artists (TAs) for the residency. The primary goal of these meetings is layering arts learning objectives with agency objectives, thereby creating a mutually agreed upon, tailored residency. In the collaborative design process, parallel processes (e.g., rhythm/meter in poetry and music) are identified and form the basis of interactive group-based lessons and activities that guide participants in the creation of collective, original works. TAs visit participating agencies one to two times per week. Each visit provides participants with opportunities to interact with live musicians, expand their musical and curricular vocabulary, work in groups, and develop musical and other curricular skills in a multi-disciplinary format. Residencies culminate in a final performance project, through which participants showcase their completed works.

This study explores a series of residencies developed and implemented at one agency with a transitional living program and a drop-in center for emerging adults experiencing homelessness and other forms of unstable housing during the 2016–17 season. These residencies focused on TAs assisting participants with writing, recording, and eventually performing original works. Residency sessions included group-based educational activities, where TAs offered instruction in beat, rhythm, melody, and harmony, as well as technical training in operating digital audio workstations (i.e., GarageBand) for music composition and production. Sessions also provided participants with opportunities to collaborate with TAs and each other through composition and performance, where participants used their newly acquired training to write, produce, and perform their own songs, with TAs often serving as co-composers, co-producers, and backing musicians. It is through this multi-faceted lens of group-based music education, training, composition, production, and performance that we explored the development and implementation of the residencies and the ways in which TA's facilitated and led residency sessions.

## Methods

### *Sample*

5HE selected TAs who then partnered with agency staff to promote the residencies at the drop-in center and the transitional living program. As members of the evaluation team, we were not involved with selecting TAs or residency participants. Inclusion criteria for participation in the evaluation included being a participant or a TA during the 2016–17 residencies at the drop-in center or transitional living program, thereby employing nonprobability purposive and homogenous sampling. Nonprobability purposive sampling intentionally includes individuals or groups thought to exhibit the phenomenon under study (Fortune & Reid, 1999). Homogenous sampling reduces variation in the sample (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Both methods are particularly useful in exploratory work. These methods were chosen given our interest in only observing participants and TAs involved in these residencies, thereby excluding agency staff, clients, or TAs not actively involved in the residencies. All participants and TAs granted us permission to observe them throughout the duration of the residencies.

Selection for participant focus groups continued the use of nonprobability purposive and homogenous sampling, albeit with an intensified focus. Intensity sampling purposefully selects "information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon intensely, but not extremely" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). We employed an intensity sampling strategy for participant focus groups in order to interview those most involved with the residencies. Up to

six participants were identified and invited to pre- and post-residency focus groups and all agreed to attend and contribute. All TAs involved in the residencies were invited to participate in TA focus groups and all agreed to attend and contribute.

Participation in the residencies varied between the locations, with the heaviest participation at the drop-in center, which at times involved as many as twenty emerging adults, and with lower participation at the transitional living program, which at times involved only one. The majority of residency participants were emerging adults of color, predominantly African American. Each residency was facilitated by at least two and up to five TAs. Unlike the majority of residency participants, TAs were of Asian American, European American, and Latin American descent. While TAs were trained in music composition and performance, few received formal training in group facilitation or leadership.

### *Procedures*

Data collection began with the process of immersion, where we met with TAs to discuss residency goals and attended curriculum development meetings with TAs and agency staff. Immersion continued as we observed residency sessions and final performances using a "jotting" method (i.e., taking small, minimally descriptive notes while in the field; Emerson et al., 1995). Jottings were developed into fieldnotes, which describe in greater detail the content and environment of sessions and final performances.

Following the first visit of each residency we invited participants who appeared to be most involved (i.e., actively engaged) to a pre-residency focus group that explored their goals, hopes, and expectations for the residency, as well as their needs from the TAs to make the residencies meaningful for them. Following the final performance of each residency, we invited participants who appeared to be most involved in the residencies and performances (i.e., weekly attendance and high levels of participation) to a post-residency focus group. Post-residency focus groups explored their experiences in the residencies and the meanings they attached to their experiences, noting in particular their experiences of working in collaboration with each other and the TAs, as well as their experiences of performing their work. Residency participants received 5 USD for each session and focus group they attended.

We invited TAs to participate in pre-, mid-, and post-residency focus groups. These focus groups explored their experiences of the residencies and sought to identify effective facilitation, leadership, and pedagogical practices, as well as areas of struggle. TA focus groups also explored their decision-making processes around residency development, implementation, roadblocks in implementing the curriculum, adaptation to roadblocks, thoughts, feelings, and reactions to this complex process. All participant and TA focus groups

were audio recorded and transcribed by members of the evaluation team. Loyola University Chicago's Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures.

### *Analysis*

All fieldnotes and focus group transcripts were analyzed using NVivo 10 and a modified version of Emerson et al.'s (1995) model of coding and memoing. Data were initially reviewed as a complete set and openly coded, making preliminary memos. Themes were then chosen, followed by focused coding that was tied together by integrative memoing. Following these steps, a thematic narrative was developed from this iterative and recursive process.

## Findings

TAs' adaptability played an important and integral role in the residencies. For the purposes of this study, we define TA adaptability in three unique and interrelated ways:

- Flexibility – TAs' ability to pivot and make changes on the fly, adapting to the residency environment
- Role adaptability – TAs' straddling multiple roles throughout the residencies, often changing and blending roles to serve the needs of the curriculum and participants' interests and needs
- Meeting participants where they are – TAs' accessibility and capacity to capitalize on participants' talents, strengths, and interests

In the following section, we examine each of these themes and provide context for how TAs' adaptability, as demonstrated in their flexibility, role adaptability, and ability to meet participants where they were, shaped the development and implementation of the residencies.

### *TA flexibility*

Residencies demanded flexibility from TAs. They needed to pivot and make changes on the fly and adapt to the residency environment. The often-hectic nature of facilitating residencies at the transitional living program and drop-in center with varying levels of attendance and participation, technology issues, competing obligations of participants, and last-minute spatial conflicts appeared to require high levels of flexibility. The goal for the fall 2016 residencies was to use the agency music studios to assist participants in writing, recording, and eventually performing original music. The transitional living program and drop-in center each had a small music production studio,

which included iMacs running Logic Pro and GarageBand music production software, MIDI instruments, and microphones.

TAs worked in earnest with agency staff to access the studios at both sites, but continually encountered logistical issues in accessing the equipment, with the biggest roadblock being staff turnover and limited ongoing management and support for the studio spaces and equipment. After several unsuccessful attempts to access the studios at both sites, TAs worked with the 5HE curriculum coordinator and agency staff to develop modified lesson plans that focused on lyric writing with music composition and accompaniment by TAs. In this instance, TAs demonstrated flexibility by making curricular changes to meet the needs of the agency and by adapting to the current agency environment. Rather than forcing the existing curriculum into an unprepared environment, 5HE and the TAs pivoted and collaborated with the agency to develop something new, keeping the needs of the participants and the agency environment in mind.

TAs remained keen to use the studios for the spring 2017 residencies. The goal was to again use the studios to assist participants in writing and producing their own work, although this time through the lens of the blues. During a pre-residency focus group, a TA provided some context around the choice of the blues:

> We chose the blues because it's such a foundation for a lot of popular music styles. It's heavily based on improvisation. It encourages group participation, improvisation, and creative thinking. But it also has a form underneath it. We want them to understand the form. The part where they can create with it and create within it, the constructs of that form.

In selecting the blues, the TAs choose a musical genre that allowed improvisation with the hope that creating space for improvisation would allow for high levels of participation. Rather than forcing a particular style of music education, writing, production, and performance (e.g., classically trained musicians teaching classical composition and form), the TAs demonstrated flexibility by incorporating accessible styles to enhance participation through improvisation and providing a template from which participants could write their own songs.

Unfortunately, the spring residency at the drop-in center was canceled due to agency staffing issues, which resulted in the drop-in center being closed for the majority of the scheduled time for the residency. When it reopened, 5HE and the TAs created a modified curriculum, but it was eventually canceled and postponed until the summer. The summer residency eventually fell through as well due to a full staffing and programming re-visioning process at the drop-in center. While the residency was not delivered, a great deal of planning and communication occurred among 5HE, the TAs, the agency, and the evaluation team. Throughout the process, the TAs continually demonstrated their

flexibility in challenging circumstances, at times going above and beyond what might usually be called for in terms of flexibility in meeting the needs of a partner agency and their clients.

### *Role adaptability*

In all residencies, TAs demonstrated role adaptability, often changing and blending roles to serve the needs of the curriculums and participants. While they straddled multiple roles, the most salient were that of leader and facilitator. The leadership role involved TAs taking leadership within the residency, thereby driving group content and processes (e.g., making logistical decisions in the planning of the residency, setting boundaries around attendance and participation). The facilitator role involved TAs stepping back and facilitating group content and process, thereby implicitly or explicitly inviting participants to take on leadership roles within the residency (i.e., creating space for greater participant input and creativity in the planning and implementation of the residencies). Since both roles involved TAs being active in the residency, albeit to different degrees, leading and facilitating were not mutually exclusive. Rather, TAs often positioned themselves to be simultaneously leading and facilitating, or perhaps more accurately, jumping seamlessly between both roles.

This balanced approach appeared to positively contribute to participants' experiences of the residency. During a post-residency focus group, a participant referred to the TAs as "conductors." When asked to expand on this idea they stated they felt the TAs "established control without being controlling" and "had a gentle touch, but a firm enough hand in command and guiding those around." When asked whether and how that shaped their experience of the residency, the participant stated that it made them "feel comfortable in the confident hands of a leader" and was especially impressed with the TAs' ability to know their limitations and not be afraid to ask for assistance from other TAs or participants. TAs' firm approach when leading participants through content delivery (e.g., basic musical elements of the blues) and facilitating participants through processes (e.g., writing lyrics and music) provided participants with a much-needed balance throughout the residency. Here, the TA leader-facilitator dynamic allowed this participant to feel comfortable, which contributed to their positive experience of the residency.

The following excerpt of an exchange between two TAs from a post-residency focus group provides some additional insight into how TAs considered and balanced the dual roles of facilitators and leaders. In their reflections, the first TA considers the placement and timing of the distribution of the stipends and the second TA stresses the power of the stipends.

> TA1: An idea popped into my head about establishing expectations with the participants. For example, if we were to give stipends out at the end of the visits as opposed to the beginning . . .

> TA2: Yeah, that was something that I was really considering. It helps set some expectations: "Here are the things you have to do in order to get your stipend. If you leave halfway through, I can't really give you a stipend. Also, if you have your phone out and you're not paying attention, I can't give you a stipend." There are a lot of ways that you can use the power of the stipend. It really does have some power because some people are showing up specifically for it.

In the last sentence, the second TA hints at the potentially coercive power of using the stipend as a form of "demand for performance" by the participants, which is particularly problematic considering many of the participants are unstably housed or homeless and in need of resources. They go on to discuss the complexities of navigating the use of stipends to both enhance participants' engagement and to deconstruct the inherent power dynamics in the TA-participant relationship. Being too lenient may result in participants leaving visits unfulfilled, where as being too authoritative would also be unfulfilling as participants would not have the same opportunities to express themselves and guide their own experiences. The TAs' simultaneous desire to diminish the imposed hierarchy of the TA-participant relationship while at the same time maximizing the stipends, respecting participants' autonomy, and keeping them engaged highlights the complexities of inhabiting the dual spaces of leading and facilitating the residencies.

### *Meeting participants where they are*

TAs consistently met participants where they were throughout the residencies. They were accessible to participants by often taking time to meet with them before and after residency sessions to answer composition or production questions, expand on musical ideas, or to just build a stronger relational connection. TAs also consistently developed and implemented music-based activities that centered around participants' talents, strengths, and interests, which often involved TAs expanding beyond their existing skill sets. For example, TAs were classically trained musicians, with undergraduate and graduate degrees in music composition and performance. Few TAs had experience with music production software and related hardware, such as MIDI instruments. Yet, several TAs worked to gain an understanding of these production tools as participants were interested in making beats and tracks that supported freestyles and rhymes. One TA in particular who was familiar with the music production software and hardware worked diligently to ensure residencies focused on musical forms of interest to the participants, thereby clearly meeting the participants where they were.

Another example of TAs meeting participants where they were involved TAs facilitating and holding space for participants' resistance. As the following excerpt from a fieldnote demonstrates, participants periodically took issue with residency content and the ways in which TAs framed it. In this excerpt, a participant from the drop-in center takes issue with a guest TA's prior work in a juvenile detention setting.

> As the residency session got under way, the guest TA introduced himself and discussed some of the music-related activities he's engaged in, including working for an arts and literacy program in the Juvenile Division of Cook County. He explained how one of the projects he works on is making mixtapes with some of the young men in the automatic transfer program. One participant seemed to take exception with this practice, inquiring in an exasperated tone: "They're making mix tapes … in the midst of the transfer program … you're being transferred to prison!"
>
> The guest TA and participant went back and forth, the participant seemingly not buying the benefit of young people who are being automatically transferred to prison making mix tapes, noting that he had been incarcerated as a minor. The guest TA attempted to explain the perceived benefits of the program. The participant pushed for statistics on how many of the minors in the facility are wrongly convicted. The guest TA was unsure on the exact numbers.
>
> As their exchange continued, other young people seemed to react negatively to the participant's demands for data to support the guest TA's claims. For example, one young man invited the participant to "Google.com" for the information in what sounded like an exasperated tone. Eventually, the tension was diffused when a 5HE TA who was there to support the guest TA thanked the participant for his questions and invited the participant to follow-up with him and the guest TA for a post session discussion. This seemed to satisfy the participant and the session moved on.

As we can see in the second half of this fieldnote, the exchange between the participant and the guest TA went on long enough for other participants to voice their frustration with the participant and the process. While the participant's critique of the guest TA's prior work as a means to provide context to the session may have been disruptive to some, it raised important questions about the perceived benefits of minors making mix tapes when facing a prison sentence. Further, the participant revealed that he was incarcerated as a minor and later in the residency discussed his experiences as a lyricist and producer. Clearly, this participant had valid concerns regarding the efficacy and limitations of music-based activities for minors who are incarcerated and facing prison sentences.

While 5HE residency content may not seem related to the participant's demonstration of resistance, it is important to note the participant felt comfortable and confident to demonstrate resistance during the session. This suggests the participant felt the residency was a space to voice resistance and speak his mind on juvenile justice issues and music, both of which were personal to him. Further, both the guest TA and 5HE TA were able to hold

space for the participant demonstrating resistance to residency content and respect the wishes of other residency participants to move along, thereby meeting seemingly disparate participant interests where they were and advancing the residency curriculum at the same time.

## Discussion

While art and music-based services have been used throughout the history of the social work profession, often in group settings, little is known about how they are led and facilitated. As the findings show, TAs' adaptability as demonstrated in their flexibility, role adaptability, and capacity to meet participants where they were played important roles in the development and implementation of the group-based music education residencies at the drop-in center and the transitional living program. TAs enacted flexibility in their capacity to pivot and make changes to adapt to residency environments. These efforts included designing and implementing residencies that incorporated participants' talents and interests (e.g., focusing on the blues to create space for improvisation), and working through issues with accessing studio equipment and logistical challenges in scheduling and rescheduling residencies (e.g., the spring residency at the drop-in center). With little prior experience working in social service settings and classical musical training that prioritizes replication over improvisation, TAs' growing awareness and demonstration of flexibility is a noteworthy quality for other likeminded musicians and service providers seeking to develop and implement group-based music education residencies with participants experiencing housing instability and other challenges to basic needs.

TAs demonstrated role adaptability throughout the residencies, often shifting and blending roles to serve curricular goals and participants' interests and needs. The most salient roles were group facilitator and leader. In demonstrating the role of facilitator, TAs guided discussions and sessions, yet allowed participants to drive the direction and pace of a discussion and determine the product of a session, and at times the residency (e.g., participants referring to TAs as conductors of residency sessions). In embodying the role of leader, TAs moved into a more directive role in order to guide the group (e.g., move the curriculum and the session along) and manage logistical decisions (e.g., considering how to effectively use stipends). These roles were not mutually exclusive within residencies. Rather, they appeared to exist along a continuum where TAs accessed and activated leadership and facilitation skills as needed to meet participants' interests and needs in service to residency goals.

Rose (2009) describes effective leadership as the ability to "see the group from the same perspective as the members" (p. 305). As a result, effective leaders access various roles to support group members, as well as the group

process and content. Building on this conceptualization of effective leadership, Toseland and Rivas (2017) note that effective group leadership skills vary. The less autonomous the group and its members, the more the leader must play a central role in leading the group. The more autonomous the group and its members, the more the leader may facilitate in a direction that best serves the indigenous leadership skills and styles of the group and its members. It is noteworthy that with limited prior experience and training, TAs demonstrated this nuanced attention to varying levels of facilitation and leadership throughout the residencies by attending to supporting the group with directive leadership when needed and moving into a facilitative approach as members took more active interest and ownership of the group and its work.

TAs also accessed elements of what Schwartz (2006) referred to as the role of the group worker. Established in the settlements and carried into the 20th century by social group workers, the group worker was of the membership and built on themes of friendship and camaraderie among the group worker and members. While TAs were not clients of the agency, they very much approached participants as equals and as much as possible sought to dismantle the inherent power dynamic in the TA-participant relationship. Given their limited training in group facilitation and leadership, it is perhaps the "worker perspective" that provided TAs with the necessary tools for role adaptability, as well as flexibility and the ability to meet participants where they were.

TAs met participants where they were by being accessible and developing and implementing curriculums and residencies that focused on participants' talents, strengths, and interests. As the findings demonstrate, TAs met with participants before and after residency sessions to learn more about their interests and subsequently alter and shape group activities and curricular goals to meet their interests and needs (e.g., using agency music studios to produce beats for participants' freestyles and rhymes). In addition, TAs were able to hold space for participants when they took issue with residency content. This is best demonstrated by the participant taking issue with the guest TA's description of his prior music-based work with minors experiencing incarceration.

This capacity to hold space for participants' resistance embodies several tenets of Saleebey's (2012) strengths perspective, including recognizing the value of the individual, welcoming their whole person, and attending to their holistic well-being. Further, TAs' efforts to meet the participants where they were builds on Malekoff's (2015) strengths-based approach to group work with young people by structuring residencies to welcome the whole participant, including their critiques, and sharing power within the group. All of this suggests that TAs are invested in an empowerment, strength-based adaptive approach to leading and facilitating group-based music education residencies with emerging adults experiencing homeless and other forms of housing instability.

### *Limitations*

The sample of participants for this study was limited in focus as we only engaged TAs and participants in 5HE residencies with one agency at their drop-in center and transitional living program. We are therefore unable to reliably generalize the results of this study to other contexts; we cannot assume that all group-based music education residencies will require the same kind of adaptive approach to group leadership and facilitation. The value of our findings, however, lie in viewing this study as a small-scale, in-depth case exploration of one classically trained performance ensemble and their efforts to develop and implement group-based music education residencies with emerging adults experiencing homeless and other forms of housing instability. This limited focus allowed us to examine TAs' behavior thoroughly to understand the intricacies involved in TA adaptability. While the findings are not generalizable, they offer insight into TAs' skill and characteristics and how they may be conducive to facilitating and leading group-based music education residencies.

In addition, while TAs came from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds, they did not match the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the majority of the participants. It is unclear the degree to which TAs were conscious of this disparity and its impact on the residencies. As group work practitioners, educators, and scholars continue to work to understand the legacies of colonization, slavery, racism, and anti-blackness in the U.S., and the ways in which these legacies manifest in social service provision, it is imperative to engage in conscious and unwavering anti-colonial and anti-racist group facilitation and leadership.

### *Implications*

This study adds to the existing literature on art and music-based activities in social work with groups. It supports the framing of these activities as strengths and empowerment-based approaches to practice. It builds on the rich history of using art and music-based activities to dismantle top-down, leader-centric approaches to social work with groups and advances our understanding of how these activities support and advance nondeliberative (Lang, 2016), participatory approaches to practice. This study also expands our understanding of how music-based activities are developed and implemented by specifically examining TAs' use of adaptive approaches to group leadership and facilitation, and how they do so in service to the group and its members' needs and interests.

Additional research is needed to understand how artists and musicians might best prepare themselves to work in social service settings, and more specifically how they may adapt in these settings to most effectively lead and

facilitate groups. While the TAs in this study were able to adapt to the needs of the agency and group members, other artists and musicians may not be as adaptable. Group workers could play an important role in providing training opportunities for artists and musicians seeking to lead and facilitate group-based music activities in social service settings. In the spirit of the IASWG SPARC program that endorsed and funded this study, we hope this works inspires more interest in the use of art and music-based activities in all facets of social work with groups and the larger social work profession. Group-based music education residencies and teaching artists offer much synergy with the collaborative, creative, and holistic elements of group work practice. We encourage more practice, education, and research in this area to prioritize the development and implementation of more forms of this exciting and invigorating work.

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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