

literature-review-outline

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Literature Review Outline

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Introduction:

- The subject of inquiry I have been researching is how does collaborative writing in mental health therapy help promote and improve relationships between patients and clinicians? Mental health is a part of everyone's day to day life and is a very important topic to discuss. Mental health affects billions of

people around the world, and I want to know if there are other ways excluding medication that can help improve the symptoms of mental health.

- A common theme that was found throughout my research is that writing shows to have a positive effect on the symptoms of mental health. Another common theme is that for writing, it is not always necessary to be collaborative to have this effect. The studies show that writing allows people suffering from mental health issues to learn to be vocal about their emotions and what is causing them distress. Learning to do this is what really causes the improvements and writing helps to lead to that discovery.

Theme A:

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- The theme that is found throughout my research is that writing does in fact help improve the symptoms experienced by those with mental health disabilities.
 - i. Source 1: Hirschberg, R., Sylvia, L. G., Wright, E. C., Gupta, C. T., McCarthy, M. D., Harward, L. K., Goetter, E. M., Boland, H., Tanev, K., & Spencer, T. J. (2020). Collaborative Songwriting Intervention for Veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. *The Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine* (New York, N.Y.), 26(3), 198–203.
<https://doi.org/10.1089/acm.2019.0368>. In this article, the research question was whether collaborative songwriting had any effect on the mental and physical health of veterans suffering from PTSD. While I read this article, I found that during this

experiment the majority of the veterans involved (95%) recommended this treatment and said it helped reduce the symptoms they were experiencing.

- ii. Source 2: Pehrsson, D.-E. (2007). Co-story-ing: Collaborative Story Writing with Children Who Fear. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 2(1), 85–91.
https://doi.org/10.1300/J456v02n01_08. The research question in this experiment was to help children improve their strategies when dealing with challenges. During this experiment Mrs. Green the teacher noticed that once her student Molly became comfortable enough with her teacher and realized the teacher wasn't guiding the story she was only there to help, she became more confident in creating new strategies in challenging scenarios. While this isn't based on depression or PTSD, fear is still a part of mental health, and it shows that writing can improve that.

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- iii. Source 3: Bundesen, B., Aymo-Boot, M., Djørup, A., Fritzsche, L., Gejl, T., Levin, K., ... Rosenbaum, B. (2020). REWRITIMIZE: Participatory creative writing groups led by authors in collaboration with mental health care professionals for people experiencing severe mental illness. *Nordic Journal of Arts, Culture and Health*, 2(2), 140–147.
<https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.2535-7913-2020-02-05>. The research question for this article was whether creative writing led by authors showed improvement in mental health. During this they discovered that in co-writing they could vocalize the things that brought up their symptoms and, in the end, improved their understanding of their trauma and their overall well-being.

Theme B:

- The other common theme I noticed is that for writing to improve mental health, it does not need to be collaborative.

i. Source 1: Lynn Haertl & Maier Ero-Phillips, Kristine & Adrienne. "The Healing Properties of Writing for Persons with Mental Health Conditions: Arts & Health: Vol 11 , No 1 - Get Access." The Healing Properties of Writing for Persons with Mental Health Conditions, www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17533015.2017.1413400. Accessed 13 July 2026. In this article, their research was to see how writing had an effect on people's mental health. In this experiment, it once again found that writing made improvements in the participants' mental health; however, this

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time, the experiment wasn't collaborative. They wrote on their own, but the impact of the writing was still there.

ii. Source 2: Golden, K.M. The Use of Collaborative Writing to Enhance Cohesion in Poetry Therapy Groups. *Journal of Poetry Therapy* 13, 125–138 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1021473712505>. For this article, their research was to determine whether writing while collaborating or not collaborating made a difference in results in mental health improvements. In their results, they determined that there was no difference in improvements. Both groups showed growth after learning to write about their feelings.

iii. Source 3: Vincent, Cynthia, Émilie Tremblay-Wragg, and Isabelle Plante. 2023. "Effects of a Participation in a Structured Writing Retreat on Doctoral Mental Health: An Experimental and Comprehensive Study" *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 20, no. 20: 6953.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20206953>. The research question in this article was to see whether structured writing helped had positive effects on mental health. This doctor stuck to a strict schedule that included writing in certain parts of his day. After this, he realized this steadily improved the symptoms he was experiencing. He did the writing on his own but still found the same end result of improvement.

Conclusion:

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- Writing is now showing to have lots of improvement in the psychological field. With this discovery, the possibility of writing being used in treatment plans for people diagnosed with Depression, Anxiety, PTSD, or any other mental health disorder are higher than ever. While I haven't seen any doctors actively prescribe writing as a treatment, the possibility is still there. Now that researchers have discovered high improvements on symptoms, they can start pushing for more unconventional treatments before pushing for medications.
- One strength is that all of the sources used in my research have shown evidence of some improvement in the participants' mental health disorders.

- One weakness is that the majority of my sources are based on the same form of writing. Creative writing while it wasn't the only one that showed results were the one that showed up in the majority of articles.
- What is missing in this is how the collaborative writing improves relationships with clinicians and patients. While my research question is based on that, I didn't find many articles that showed that collaborative writing improved the relationships. Instead, I found that writing, collaborative or not, is a source of treatment that improves mental health without the use of medications.
- The next step is to revise my research question into: How does collaborative writing affect the symptoms mental health issues have on a person. This way the evidence I have found supports the real question and not just a part of it. From there, I can continue my research and find people who are willing to speak out about their experience with writing and mental health. Then with enough people recommending writing as a treatment a new

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research question I am also interested in can come from it. Whether writing treatment improves mental health without the assistance of medications. Many people choose not to get help for mental health because they don't want to be on medications. This topic can find out if medication can be a secondary treatment if writing doesn't help enough.