

QUALITATIVE INQUIRIES IN MUSIC THERAPY:

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Edited by
Laurel Young

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

A fundamental purpose of music therapy research, regardless of the methodology, “is to enhance our knowledge about clinical practice, and thereby facilitate its aims” (Bruscia, 1998, p. 262). The last decade has produced an increasing amount of what is in my opinion very solid music therapy research, but as an educator, researcher, supervisor, and clinician, I am curious as to the level of impact that this research has actually had on practice. In other fields, such as psychology, the literature indicates that a considerable gap exists between research and practice and that there are several reasons why this is the case, including: (a) disagreements over what constitutes “best evidence,” (b) research findings not organized or communicated in ways that are applicable to clinical settings, (c) unavailability to clinicians of easy or ongoing access to published research, and (d) unavailability to clinicians of the means (i.e., authority, time, skills, etc.) to make the systemic changes needed to implement new practices—even when these practices are supported by strong research evidence (Dozois, 2013; Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2006). My own experiences lead me to believe that these same problems exist in the field of music therapy. Unfortunately, it is beyond the scope of this editorial to engage in a lengthy discussion as to how we might go about addressing each of these particular issues. However, I would like to take this opportunity to suggest that the *act* of conducting research in and of itself can have a very direct, immediate, and far-reaching impact on music therapy practice(s).

Although the concept of reflexivity is normally associated with qualitative methodologies, *all* rigorous research requires a careful scrutiny of one's practices as they relate to the epistemological foundations of the study in question. The reflexive nature of qualitative research is such that researchers must not only examine their personal relationship to the topic but also embrace it as part of the research process. On the other hand, quantitative researchers must be keenly aware of personal bias throughout all phases of the research so as not to allow it to inadvertently affect the outcomes. Essentially, different kinds of reflexivity are needed for different types of inquiries, and when the necessary personal awareness is present, the research results will at the very least have a direct impact on the researcher's own practices (e.g., clinical, teaching, future research, etc.). This, in turn, causes a ripple effect whereby all persons who come into contact with these *revised* practices (e.g., clients, students, other professionals, etc.) are affected in multiple ways. Although I cannot quantify or generalize the level of this impact, it seems to me that the potential for knowledge enhancement and subsequent change through the mere *act* of conducting well-designed *reflexive* research is highly significant. I know for certain that it has had and continues to have a profound impact on my own professional practices.

Volume 8 of *Qualitative Inquiries in Music Therapy (QIMT)* contains three monographs that emerged directly out of the authors' own professional and personal experiences. The first, *Resonant Learning: A Qualitative Inquiry into Music Therapy Students' Self-Experiential Learning Processes*, is written by Charlotte Lindvang. Lindvang examines how self-experiential learning processes that took place within the context of the music therapy training program at Aalborg University in Denmark were related to the development of the student participants' music therapy competencies. In

addition to being a faculty member at this university, Lindvang completed her own music therapy training at Aalborg and had her own experiences of participating in self-experiential learning processes, both as a student and as a facilitator. Undoubtedly, these experiences not only helped her to examine this important topic from multiple perspectives but also contributed to her own personal level of investment in this multilayered, complex, and creative research process. Of particular note is her five-point star model, which succinctly represents the personal, the practical, and the symbolic elements that exist between and among the interrelated themes of experiential learning that emerged from her study.

Crying in Music Therapy: An Exploratory Study, was written by Yadira Albornoz, who examined the lived experiences of individuals who cried during music therapy sessions or experiential trainings. While each of the seven participants had a unique experience of crying in music therapy, all of the participants ultimately perceived that these experiences were important and helpful. Given that there is a lack of research on crying in therapy contexts at large, Albornoz's study provides an important foundation for building theory and for conducting further research. Furthermore, her work raises important questions regarding the role of music in both eliciting and processing the crying response in music therapy contexts.

Appropriately, the third and final monograph of this volume is entitled *Closing Time: Clients' Shared Experiences of Termination of a Music Therapy Group in Community Mental Health* and was written by Lauren Hudgins. It is interesting to note, that in spite of the obvious importance of this topic, very little has actually been published on termination in music therapy. Not since the landmark articles of McGuire and Smeltekop (1994a, 1994b) has this subject been reviewed so comprehensively. I believe that any clinician who has ever struggled with termination or gone through a termination process not only will find this work to be interesting and informative, but also will discover that it has a variety of practical applications—not the least of which are ways in which music can be used to help facilitate constructive, meaningful, and personalized termination processes.

Dissemination of these monographs through open-access publication is one way of making research accessible to everyone and thus effecting change. It is my hope that these studies will inspire constructive change in your practices or even motivate you to conduct your own research. Perhaps with enough ripples, we can create a wave.

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