

QUALITATIVE INQUIRIES IN MUSIC THERAPY:

A MONOGRAPH SERIES

VOLUME 3

2007

Edited by

Anthony Meadows

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Qualitative Inquiries in Music Therapy Volume 3 continues the tradition of presenting substantive qualitative studies that point to new directions in music therapy research and clinical practice. It is my pleasure to introduce these to you, and offer a small comparative summary of the volume.

Lillian Eyre, in *Changes in Images, Life Events and Music in Analytical Music Therapy: A Reconstruction of Mary Priestley's Case Study of "Curtis"* offers a substantive analysis of Priestley's work, using her diaries, published writings, and analysis of various clinical improvisations using the Improvisation Assessment Profiles (IAPs)¹. Of particular significance is the way Eyre combines these sources for an in-depth analysis and interpretation of Priestley's work. Not only will the reader develop a richer understanding of how the music, imagery and life events of Curtis unfolded, but will also develop a broader appreciation for Analytical Music Therapy. The reader is encouraged to visit www.barcelonapublishers.com to listen to audio excerpts of the five improvisations analyzed by Eyre.

Kathleen Murphy, in *Experiential Learning in Music Therapy: Faculty and Student Perspectives*, explores the perspectives of educators and students on the various roles, types, and outcomes of experiential learning in music therapy education and training. Murphy expands our understanding of experiential learning. Not only does she differentiate the perspectives of educators and students, she also categorizes the types of experiences, roles of faculty and students, and learning outcomes. Of particular value to the reader is Murphy's notion that experiential learning is more than a conglomerate of methods and techniques. It is a learning *process* wherein students develop a deeper understanding of themselves, their clients, and the therapeutic process. This learning experience is cumulative, with later training experiences building upon earlier ones so that students experience a *ógestaltó* — deepening their knowledge of clinical practice and themselves simultaneously.

Douglas Keith, in *Understanding Music Improvisations: A Comparison of Methods of Meaning-Making*, examines the differing ways in which ten clients and one therapist make meaning of various types (titled and untitled) and forms (solo and duet) of improvisation. Using journals, client interviews and musical analysis (IAPs), Keith found that there were fundamental differences in the ways he and the participants talked about their improvisations when they were titled and untitled. He also found differing benefits to solo vs. duet improvisations. His findings have important implications for how therapists work in improvisational music therapy, particularly around the use of titled improvisations, solo and duet playing, and verbal processing. As such, Nordoff-Robbins Music Therapists will find Keith's conclusions challenging, particularly with regards their methodological tendency to work solely in non-referential duets.

Jennifer Sokira, in *Interpreting the Communicative Behaviors of Clients with Rett Syndrome in Music Therapy: A Self-Inquiry*, examines her own experiences of working with Rett Syndrome girls. Through an analysis of session videotapes, she discovered that significant exchanges between client and therapist can be understood in terms of the *ótherapist's*

¹ Bruscia, K. E. (1987). *Improvisational models of music therapy*. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

interpretations, therapists' responses and therapists' processes. Based upon these categories, she discovered that she used a cyclical interpretive process to understand the communicative behaviors of these girls, and that this interpretive process guided her clinical decisions. These findings have important implications for music therapists working with Rett syndrome children as they attest to the importance of self-awareness and the subjective nature of work with this population.

Lars Ole Bonde, in *Imagery, Metaphor and Perceived Outcome in Six Cancer Survivors' BMGIM Therapy* examines the BMGIM (Bonny Method of Guided Imagery and Music) (Bonny, 1978) experiences of women recovering from cancer. Bonde's study is divided into two major areas. First, he interviewed each client to understand how she perceived the therapeutic process and outcome(s) of her BMGIM therapy. Second, he analyzed the transcripts of each client's BMGIM session to understand the types of narratives used in the music-imagery portions of the sessions. His findings add further depth to our understanding of narrative processes in BMGIM, and affirm our developing understanding of the types of therapeutic potentials possible in BMGIM with cancer patients.

In reflecting on these monographs, it is interesting to note the great variety of ways in which data were gathered. This included using client and/or therapist journals (Eyre, Keith), published writings (Eyre), analyses of musical improvisations using the Improvisation Assessment Profiles (IAPs) (Bruscia, 1987) (Eyre, Keith), interviews (Bonde, Keith, Murphy), videotape analysis (Sokira), and analysis of session transcripts (Bonde). Similarly, a variety of methods were used to analyze the data. This included analyzing, coding, and holistically describing the data (Eyre, Murphy, Sokira), developing a theory (Bonde, Murphy, Sokira), and interpreting the data based on collective analysis from several sources (Eyre, Keith). Notice that the participants in these studies were not only traditional clients, but also therapists and the researchers themselves. All this attests to the tremendous variety and vitality of qualitative research in music therapy, and the breadth and depth of material contained within this volume.

It is also fascinating to examine some of the shared methodological decisions of these researchers. All had to deal with collective analysis: that is, how to take the data of each participant (whether as interview data, musical analysis, video analysis, journal data, or all) and make a collective narrative summary across participants. Keith described this process clearly when he talked about the tension between a positivistic approach (focusing on regularities or patterns), a nonpositivistic approach (in which the stories, reflections and/or experiences of the participants were treated only within themselves, and not in relation to any of the other participants) (Eyre, Murphy), or a combination of both approaches (Bonde, Keith, Sokira). This is an important area of discussion amongst qualitative researchers, and these studies attest to the great variety of techniques taken in addressing this dilemma.

With each of these studies, we are invited into the world of the researcher: not only to understand their research, but to understand them and their clients as *people*, and to navigate the challenges that they encountered in the research process. The journey is well worth it!

Anthony Meadows
Guest Editor