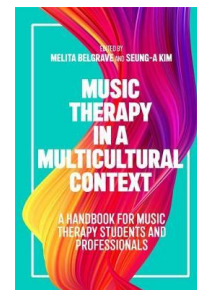


BOOK REVIEW

Music therapy in a multicultural context (Belgrave & Kim, Eds.)

Reviewed by Kerryn Tracey

Independent scholar, South Africa



Title: Music therapy in a multicultural context **Editors:** Melita Belgrave & Seung-A Kim **Publication year:** 2020 **Publisher:** Jessica Kingsley Publishers **Pages:** 192 **ISBN:** 9781785927980

REVIEWER BIOGRAPHY

Kerryn Tracey, MMus Music Therapy, MMus Composition, is a music therapist practising in Cape Town, South Africa. She works for a non-profit organisation within a community music therapy framework alongside community music practitioners. She also works in private practice. Her areas of interest are community music therapy, the supporting influences of music therapy on youth resilience, music therapy and dementia care, and music therapy with special needs clients. [kerryntracey@gmail.com]

Publication history:

Submitted 22 Aug 2021

Accepted 30 Aug 2021

First published 18 Oct 2021

Edited by Melita Belgrave and Seung-A Kim, *Music Therapy in a Multicultural Context* seeks to present topics on multiculturalism that the authors feel are absent or under-represented in current music therapy literature. The introduction to the text states that the topics discussed are crucial to the understanding and practice of music therapy and music as a whole.

The text was commissioned by Jessica Kingsley Publishers. The editors and primary authors served on a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee as part of the American Music Therapy Association (AMTA). This is important for the reader to note as the text and statistics are situated in an American context. Nonetheless, the information presented is valuable to a wider audience of music therapists given that the many aspects of culture may be considered to be universal in some ways.

Each chapter offers a bite-sized foray into a different topic. The authors begin by situating themselves in their personal and cultural contexts. The chapters each include a literature review, highlighting where there is a lack of educational resources. The chapters also include case study examples and/or study/discussion questions. In Chapter 1, Kim opens with a tantalising statement that sets the tone of the rest of the book: “Culture is all around me” (p 9). The chapter centres around music as an acculturation strategy and seeks to better understand the role of culture in music therapy. The characteristics of culture are examined, and Kim takes the stance that culture can be viewed using both universalism and relativism. She further proposes a tripartite model of cultural being – individual, collective, and universal. This is a useful model that the reader can use to integrate seemingly opposing frameworks of cultural identity. Therapist self-awareness is highlighted and humility is emphasised, given that we as music therapists “are also human beings who can make a mistake” (p.23). Chapter 2 investigates musical and cultural considerations for building rapport in music therapy practice. The term “rapport” is unpacked and the importance of cultural humility is discussed.

Of particular importance is the short section on the challenges of the colourblind approach. Here, King notes that such a stance is in direct opposition to the call for music therapists to be culturally aware and sensitive. Chapter 3 is perhaps one of the most-needed sections of this book as LGBTQ+ music therapy seems to be woefully under-represented within the field of music therapy. Authors Robinson and Oswanski explain that LGBTQ+ clients and therapists all have a number of intersecting identities that combine to create an array of complex experiences that involve a higher or lower degree of oppression. Although the LGBTQ+ facet of identity may often be “invisible,” the authors note that “it is almost inevitable that every music therapy student or professional ... will work with someone who identifies as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning, as well as additional identities indicated by the + sign” (p. 79). LGBTQ+ affirming music therapy is discussed and a brief history of music and the LGBTQ+ scene is given. Chapter 4 investigates ageing through a multicultural lens. Here, Belgrave cautions that music therapists should guard against reducing an elderly client to a decade of potentially-relevant music choices. The ADDRESSING model as developed by Hays (1996) and implemented in music therapy by Brown (2001) is discussed and presents a very useful framework for identifying the multicultural influences of any client. The importance of considering movement in a multicultural context is discussed by Thomas in Chapter 5: “Dance and Movement Across Cultures.” Here it is highlighted that it is not only music that presents as our earliest communicative language but movement as well. Finally, Chapter 6 explores cultural humility in clinical music therapy supervision and suggests that the supervisor be open to learning both from the supervisee’s client and also from the supervisee.

As a reader and music therapy practitioner, I found the study/discussion questions to be of particular value. King unpacks the concept of cultural humility as opposed to cultural competence. If cultural competence is considered to be an end-point of cultural accrual – a final destination – then cultural humility may be considered to be an on-going and others-oriented journey with a commitment to continual learning. As such, the book as a whole, and the study/discussion questions in particular, could perform as a travelling companion to the music therapist whereby these questions could be revisited time and again and, in theory, could uncover different aspects and knowledge for the practitioner.

Belgrave and Kim believe that *Music Therapy in a Multicultural Context* is “instrumental for practicing music therapists, educators, clinical supervisors, and students alike” (p 8). Perhaps paradoxically, the text is tantalising in its complexity yet remains refreshing in its simplicity. Each chapter reminds the reader that what they are about to peruse is part of an immense topic filled with nuance. Despite the need for brevity, the chapters provide a great deal of insight into their specific topics. Each author includes practical points, questions, and/or steps that the reader can take in order to broaden his/her/their understanding of culture, reminding us that the book is a starting point for greater multicultural awareness. It will provide a valuable addition to the field.

REFERENCES

- Brown, J.M. (2001). Towards a culturally centered music therapy practice. *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy*, 8(1), 11-24.
<https://doi.org/10.15845/voices.v2i1.72>
- Hays, P.A. (1996). Addressing the complexities of a culture and gender in counseling. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 74(4), 332-337. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1002/j.1556-6676.1996.tb01876.x>