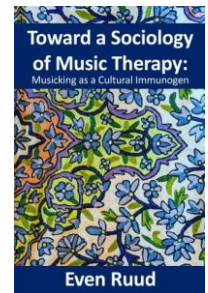


BOOK REVIEW

Toward a sociology of music therapy: Musicking as a cultural immunogen (Ruud)

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Title: Toward a sociology of music therapy: Musicking as a cultural immunogen **Author:** Even Ruud **Publication year:** 2020
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As a music therapist practicing in America, I have grown accustomed to the ways in which the practice has fit itself into various fields. Like blocks in a game of Tetris, therapists rotate and align the outcomes of music with our healthcare, education, and social systems. For example, the healthcare systems in the U.S. traditionally use a pathogenic approach. By focusing on the symptoms of the disease or disorder first, music therapy practice in medical settings often assesses the challenges of the ailment before developing treatment goals and objectives, which typically aim to reduce the symptoms of pain or stress. While those are common outcomes in medical music therapy practice around the world, the unique systems of each country influence clinical understandings and approaches.

In contemplating how music fits into a salutogenic approach that focuses on proactively and holistically promoting health, Even Ruud offers a new understanding of music as a preventative measure. *Toward a Sociology of Music Therapy: Musicking as a Cultural Immunogen* suggests that musicking is a “way of living associated with longer life and lower risk of illness” (p. 2). Similar to preventative acts of eating well and exercising, various acts of musicking can be beneficial to overall health and well-being. Listening to music can support emotional regulation and generalize into determining other forms of self-regulation, while playing in ensembles can support social interaction and encourage connection in times of isolation or conflict. Though we may already understand these benefits as music therapists, Ruud calls attention to current limitations of music therapy in correlation with the potentials of music itself:

If our intention is to give music or musicking a crucial place in the advancement of (public) health in society, we have to show how there are many ways to achieve this – and there will always be too few music therapists to fill in the gaps. (pp. 47-48)

The following chapters explore the potentials of health musicking through anecdotes, interviews, and case studies. *Affective Resonance* is the first health musicking potential explored. Ruud examines music's relation to "emotional perception, reception, and induction," as well as how those relations are associated with health (p. 75). An example is shared of a woman working through grief after the loss of her husband by solitarily categorizing her CD collection by emotion and then listening to the categories that matched her emotions. Though her musical coping seems isolating, engaging with artists in this way allowed her to "create a foundational relationship with the world and a possibility for living a more successful life" (p. 84). Following *Affective Resonance*, the health musicking potentials of *Agency and Self-Efficacy* are explored. Ruud mentions approaches utilizing therapeutic songwriting and interactive music technology that afford opportunities for agency, but also reminds readers of the posthuman philosophies that challenge the Western concept of agency. He proposes that agency is not just personal, stating "agency is distributed and interdependent upon circumstances in our immediate surroundings" (p. 127).

Looking beyond the individual, the next potential explored is health musicking as a *Social Resource*, specifically through community building. The field of sociology emphasizes "the importance of cultural belonging, citizenship, participation, dialogue, and acknowledgement," which seems to be resonant with the work of music therapy and community musicians (p. 138). To exemplify music's role in the social integration, Ruud shares a case study from Luna (2018) that integrated former FARC guerillas from Columbia back into society through improvisation, re-creation, music listening, and composition. The last health musicking potentials explored are grouped as *Identity, Transcendence, and Spirituality*. Though much could be said on music's role in each, Ruud summarizes by writing "the arts give access to deep emotional experiences, creating hope and meaning or a mood conducive to an openness to explore the world. But this demands something from us... a belief in our abilities to influence the world" (p. 172).

Following the exploration of these benefits, Ruud envisions what the expansion of health musicking means for music therapists. With further reflection from therapists on the "concepts, metaphors, and theoretical constructs" they currently operate under, music therapy may develop into more of a transdisciplinary field, serving "not only music therapy practices, but also city planners, health authorities, architects designing health facilities, music teachers, and educators, planning for better school environments and learning conditions" (pp. 301, 303). By expanding into these relationships with other disciplines, more individuals and communities may be afforded opportunities to experience musicking and its potentials of affective resonance, agency, self-efficacy, community building, identity, transcendence, and spirituality.

Toward a Sociology of Music Therapy: Musicking as a Cultural Immunogen suggests a possible future for music therapy with a thorough post-humanist inquiry into musicking, philosophy, public health, and sociology. Even Ruud weaves through anecdotes, interviews, case studies, and personal thoughts on music in both salutogenic and community approaches. In doing so, he encourages music therapists to rotate the Tetris blocks of music therapy and question "what," or even "where," is next for our field. I recommend this book for music therapists who are curious about the future of music therapy and how musicking can fit into sociology. I also recommend this book to public health, social, and education professionals who hope to collaborate in future practice and research.