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ARTICLE

The role of pluralism in fostering an ethic of social justice: Policy recommendations for music therapy education and training

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ABSTRACT

Recent social justice-focused and anti-oppressive scholarship has called for broader and more intentional inclusion of critical analyses and constructivist epistemological frames to promote equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and decolonisation in music therapy education and training. The recent expansion of social justice content in the revised code of ethics of the Canadian Association of Music Therapists (CAMT) is a step in the right direction. It requires certified music therapists to actively identify, understand, and eliminate implicit biases and discriminatory practices and to cultivate awareness of the harms that have been exacted by oppressive practices within and beyond the profession. We argue, here, that preparing music therapy students to meet professional standards of practice and adhere to the social justice-focused ethical principles articulated in the code of ethics requires Canadian music therapy education programs to intentionally integrate dissension as a key aspect of social justice work throughout their curriculum. In this critical contemplation, we posit that mobilising a commitment to social justice education must first and foremost be grounded in a pluralistic ethos, which values diverse ways of being, thinking, learning and knowing. We then explore the critical integration of lived knowledge, the notions of dignity safety and intellectual insecurity in educational spaces, and arts-based social pedagogies as potentially transformative practices in socially-just music therapy education.

KEYWORDS

music therapy education,
social pedagogy,
critical disability studies,
code of ethics,
social justice,
pluralism

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INTRODUCTION

Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, existing unacknowledged inequities and injustices have been exposed in educational structures around the world (Lawless et al., 2021). In music therapy education, inequities highlighted in the literature include the dominance of a deficit ideology in curriculum and teaching practices with certain groups, such as disabled and neurodivergent individuals, leading to the pathologisation of their "normal" existence (see Bakan, 2014; Bruce, 2022; Davies, 2022; Pickard et al., 2020; Shaw et al., 2022 for more discussion). The literature also points to heteronormative and Eurocentric assumptions embedded in curriculum that fail to acknowledge perspectives of minoritised students and therapists (e.g., Edwards & Baines, 2022; Gombert, 2022). This Eurocentric stance is also said to coexist with a "color-evasive and depoliticized" (Norris, 2020b, p. 2) approach in music therapy education with a concomitant sidestepping of issues related to varying forms of oppression. Limited pathways to certification often favour certain types of students and interests while silencing experiences of exclusion and marginalisation (e.g., Bruce, 2022; Pickard, 2022; Pickard et al., 2020).

These systemic problems are deeply rooted in the structures, processes, and norms of our music therapy profession, including its educational practices (Swamy & Webb, 2022b). Systemic problems resist simple solutions due to complex interactions between factors like institutional policies, cultural beliefs, power dynamics, and historical contexts. They require comprehensive and sustained efforts to enact structural changes and to shift underlying beliefs and values within the systems. Students and faculty have accordingly called for pedagogical reforms that require higher-education institutions, and the professional organisations that set program standards, to actively work toward the demonstrable realisation of their stated social justice commitments.

In the Canadian educational landscape, the substantive expansion of social justice content in the revised code of ethics of the Canadian Association of Music Therapists (CAMT) is a notable important step. Yet, as the CAMT (n.d.) itself acknowledges, "there is much work to be done as we improve our social justice efforts." We propose, therefore, that it is essential to explore how we might meaningfully realise a social justice commitment in music therapy education and training by taking up pluralism to encourage dissension and agonism in order to prompt deep reflection about multiple perspectives that impact complex social issues in a postmodern society (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985; Mouffe, 2008). Through this critical contemplation, we argue that pluralism is essential to fostering

socially just music therapy education and training. We begin by providing an overview of notions of pluralism and its relevance for music therapy education and training. Then, we propose a number of policy considerations rooted in both our cumulative experiences as educators and recent social justice literature. We provide examples of how these policies may be enacted and identify challenges that may be encountered.

We assert, because policy-making is a situated process and Canada is our shared context, that grounding this article in the Canadian education landscape was the necessary and even ethical decision. We believe, however, that our critical contemplation will resonate with educators in other parts of the world and in related professions (e.g., art educators, social service and mental health service providers) who face similar challenges.

PLURALISM AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Enacting a social justice commitment through pluralistic approaches involves engaging with opinions and viewpoints that differ from our own. This requires effort, a willingness to take risk, and the ability to sit with the discomfort and vulnerability that may arise. Pluralism is defined as "an ethic of respect for diversity" (Global Centre for Pluralism, n.d., "Key principles"), and we view its cultivation as a call to action for educators who aim to create socially just teaching and learning spaces in music therapy programs. It promotes engagement with diversity, which involves "recognizing, responding to, and negotiating the differences in power that diversity embodies in systems characterized by oppression" (Stewart, 2012, p. 64). In this way, pluralism acknowledges "the existence of ineliminable diversity and the impossibility of a final rational ranking of values, interests, or beliefs" (Yumatle, 2015, p. 5). Educating for pluralism, then, requires that we move from stigmatisation, beyond tolerance, and towards acceptance, inclusion, and belonging (Pickard, 2022). We must encourage agonistic forms of engagement that promote respectful dissension and consideration of perspectives that might differ from our own (Mouffe, 2008). Agonism, unlike antagonistic forms of "othering," favours deep reflection on key social justice issues and accepts discomfort as a key agent of democratic functioning that occurs when we engage with opposing viewpoints (Nelson & Venkatesh, 2024; Venkatesh, 2023).

Social justice promotes fair and equitable treatment of all individuals and groups in a society. This is made possible through affirming collaborative democratic actions aimed at disassembling systemic barriers (Rodenkirch & Hill, 2022; Stewart, 2012). Social justice movements often mobilise around specific goals, such as the promotion of anti-racist, anti-colonial, or anti-ableist policy and practice while attending variably to the harmful impacts of intersecting systems of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989). Despite their differences, these diverse social justice advocacy movements all aim to make visible inequitable structures and the exclusionary policies they generate as a first step towards social change. Unfortunately, the pervasive use of the general social justice label in a world marked by a confluence of crises and social ills renders it difficult "to cut through the fog of competing discourses on this topic" (Reisch, 2014, p. 1).

Fostering socially just music therapy education and training

Music therapy is sometimes narrowly framed as a discipline primarily concerned with practice (Baker & Young, 2016; Bruscia, 2014). Yet, we believe that practice, theory, and research critically inform one another and are equally vital to the development of a pluralistic approach. Music therapy education, where theory, research, and practice foundations are taught, plays a particularly important role in bringing each of these elements together in ways that might foster a socially just profession. In Canada, there are six music therapy education programs that offer university-level pre-professional and post-professional training. While the structure of our education and training programs is similar to those in the United States, as the Certification Board for Music Therapists (CBMT) grants professional certification in both countries, the education, healthcare and social services systems in which music therapists work are very different and vary across provinces and territories. In this diverse Canadian landscape, the CAMT plays an important standard setting role by reviewing and recognising programs, requiring that they prepare students to meet specific clinical competencies, and ensuring they are prepared to work in their respective contexts within CAMT's standards and scope of practice (CAMT, 2012, 2023). The standards of practice require certified music therapists (MTAs) to uphold the ethical standards articulated in the CAMT Code of Ethics (CAMT, 2022), which contains recent expanded social justice content.

We argue that this added social justice content, which can be found in "Principle 1: Respect for the dignity and rights of persons," is of particular interest for music therapy education programs. Article 1.7 addresses the imperative for MTAs to address biases through critical education and self-reflection:

> The MTA will engage in ongoing work to identify, understand, and unlearn any conscious or unconscious biases, and will work to understand how any such biases can and do impact their clinical approach and decision-making, their clients' experience in music therapy, and their therapeutic relationships, with the aim of transforming their practice. Ongoing professional learning and critical self-reflection should be inclusive of, but not limited to: a) work to cultivate an awareness of how helping professions have contributed to historical, political, and sociocultural harms endured by Indigenous peoples; b) work to cultivate an awareness of the past and current harms inflicted by colonization, and to formulate an approach to music therapy that supports reconciliation; c) work to cultivate an awareness of how all forms of racism have and continue to exist in helping professions and to identify and remove them in their practice; d) work to understand the harms historically and currently caused by helping professions that participate in the perpetuation of ableism. (pp. 4–5)

So, it is clear that to prepare music therapy students to meet the professional standards of practice, which include adherence to the ethical principles outlined in the Code of Ethics, music therapy education programs must address social justice issues as part of their curriculum.

Recent justice-focused scholarship undergirds our assertion and calls for broader and more intentional inclusion of critical analyses to promote equity, diversity, inclusion, accessibility, and decolonisation in music therapy education and training (Baines, 2021; Bruce, 2022; Edwards & Baines, 2022; Norris, 2020a; Pickard, 2022; Shaw et al., 2022; Zinga & Styres, 2019). While calls to

diversify the profession are not new (Hadley, 2013; Imeri & Jones, 2022), the field has been slow to respond to the academic and grassroots efforts of many social justice forerunners (Swamy & Webb, 2022b). To contribute to these efforts, we propose a series of policies that aim to establish pluralism as an essential component of any attempt to foster socially just music therapy education and training. We hope that the proposed policies will help to answer the important question: "how might pluralism support the realisation of an ethic of social justice in music therapy education and training?"

CRITICAL CONTEMPLATION PROCESS

To begin to answer this question, we engaged in a critical contemplation process, which involved critically examining our own educational practices and reinterpreting relevant social justice scholarship through the lens of educational pluralism (Kaufman, 2017), ultimately leading to meaningful policy recommendations. We consulted justice-focused music therapy scholarship published in the last decade (between 2014 and 2024), paying particular attention to special issues published in peer-reviewed music therapy journals that intentionally centred minoritised experiences and perspectives (notably Bain & Gumble, 2019; Hadley, 2014; Millard, 2022; M. Norris et al., 2021; Swamy & Webb, 2022a; Viega, 2017). This process was not systematic; it led us to consult articles and monographs referenced in the special issues, but also to expand to the scholarship of other relevant fields such as critical disability studies and education. This provided a basis from which we started to contextualise and organically expand upon the role of pluralism in our decades of collective experiences as educators. As such, we leveraged our lived knowledge by reflecting and expanding on our individual and collective experiences researching, teaching, and developing curriculum and policies in fields including education, art education, critical disability studies, education and music therapy.

As co-authors, we acknowledge that we enact our pedagogies differently, but we also share the conviction that pluralism is an essential condition of socially just music therapy education. This conviction was corroborated in the literature we read, yet as a distinct concept, pluralism seemed to have received limited attention in the music therapy literature (Goodman, 2023; Low et al., 2020). In this way, our critical contemplation, which takes on the form of policy recommendations, bridges the "inner-directed" practice of reflecting and questioning our own practices with the "outer-directed" process of re-storying current relevant social justice scholarship from the viewpoint of educational pluralism (Kaufman, 2017). We chose to generate ethically-motivated policy recommendations, alongside concrete ways of enacting the policies and overcoming potential challenges because we believe policy is a living and collaborative process of building alternatives to existing realities and limitations – alternatives rooted in both theory and praxis (Schmidt, 2009, 2020). Our aim is not to provide a definitive and exhaustive list of policies, but to begin a conversation around the types of changes we want to see in music therapy education.[1] In this context, "policy can play a sobering role, reminding us that being fair and equitable are challenging but feasible goals" (Schmidt, 2020, p. 12).

[1] For more information on the importance of educators to contribute to the development of policies, see Schmidt, 2009.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

In the following section, we propose three policies to support pluralistic dialogues on social justice issues in the context of music therapy education: (1) critically integrating lived knowledge of exclusion and marginalisation, (2) clarifying the notion of safe-space, and (3) leveraging critical arts-based pedagogies. Considerations for how these policies might be enacted and challenges that may be encountered in the implementation process are presented.

1. Critically integrating lived knowledge of exclusion and marginalisation

We assert that lived knowledge of minoritisation/marginalisation, exclusion, and complexity is valuable, and even essential, to the realisation of the pluralistic frame that is necessary for fostering a more socially just profession. There is, importantly, a growing emphasis on social justice within the music therapy profession (e.g., Baines, 2013, 2021; Baines & Edwards, 2018; Curtis, 2012, 2015; Edwards & Baines, 2022; Fansler et al., 2019; Hadley, 2013; Hadley & Thomas, 2018; Leonard, 2020; Norris, 2020a, 2020b; Vaillancourt, 2012). Disability, ableism, and accessibility receive a disappointingly limited level of attention in these social justice discourses (Bruce, 2022), and this gap exemplifies the chronic under-representation of minoritised perspectives and social justice issues in the music therapy literature (Swamy & Webb, 2022b) and, accordingly, in music therapy education resources. Ableism, which involves favouring the achievement or emulation of certain abilities equated as normal (Campbell, 2009; Goodley, 2014), has been identified as a significant discriminatory factor affecting the education and training experiences of disabled students in music therapy (Bruce, 2016, 2022; Shaw et al., 2022; Warren, 2023). Critical analyses, however, are beginning to emerge and they are leveraging lived disability experiences to expose the harmful impacts of ableism and highlight the need to respond to related knowledge gaps in educational contexts. Bakan (2014; Bakan et al., 2018), for instance, problematises the positioning of non-autistic individuals as authorities on autistic peoples' relationships with music, and Bruce (2022) mobilises her lived experience of blindness to argue for essential consideration of how ableism influences disabled peoples' connections with music. We argue that there is room for disruptive approaches like post-ableist music therapy (Shaw, 2022) and anti-oppressive pedagogy (Pickard, 2022) that can drive positive change through the critical integration of lived knowledge in music therapy education and training.

Enacting the policy

Enacting this policy requires specific committed action in several domains that include admission, pedagogical, and evaluation strategies. Program admission requirements and processes, for example, may require revision to accomplish clear communication of a commitment to welcoming diverse lived experiences and knowledges. Most Canadian music therapy program admission requirements are informed by CAMT education and certification standards which regrettably represent a very narrow applicant profile, one that privileges applicants with access to post-secondary education and music training in Western traditions. Questioning our assumptions

and destabilising the dominance of normatively valued pre-requisites for music therapy applicants, then, is essential. Doing so would require us to examine the barriers that prevent potential applicants from accessing relevant prerequisite knowledge and experience and, most importantly, the assumptions that devalue some knowledge and experience while privileging others (Swamy & Webb, 2022b). Pickard (2022) urges us to reconsider how we assign value to specific individual skills and normatively completed procedures, such as the ability to read notation, the completion of an undergraduate degree, or the ability to complete inaccessible application forms and to participate in interviews and auditions.

Bringing minoritised, and often excluded, voices to the centre of teaching and learning also necessitates faculty diversification and, therefore, more intentionally equitable hiring practices. Such efforts must go beyond full-time faculty hiring and intentionally include part-time faculty and guest lecturers if we want to meaningfully amplify the music, texts, and experiences of marginalised music therapists and music therapy participants. Disabled and racialised participants, musicians, and experts can and do offer invaluable insights based on their lived, scholarly, and professional experiences. However, those who bring their knowledge to a music therapy curriculum context must be valued and, therefore, appropriately compensated for their time and expertise (Pickard, 2022).

Intentional faculty diversification might be accompanied by an articulated social justice commitment that centres the critical integration of diverse forms of lived knowledge as a curriculum imperative. Such a commitment, however, must be connected to clear actionable strategies to avoid being performative. In practice, curriculum development and renewal processes are generally ongoing, and this makes them ideal spaces for continuous consideration of how to integrate current lived knowledge. It is similarly helpful if educators have a clear course structure that makes space for diverse knowledges and ways of being and doing (Webb & Abrams, 2022). Utilising course framing questions, rather than pre-determined learning outcomes or objectives, is one way to do this and to effectively support critical thinking and student-centred learning – both of which are essential for fostering pluralistic dialogues (Aylward, personal communication, April 6, 2023).

How we choose to order course topics, and the resources we use to explore them, is also a key consideration. Leading with theoretical frames representing dominant perspectives, for example medicalised definitions of blindness articulated by sighted physicians rather than experiences of blindness offered by blind individuals or professionals, risks subjugating already minoritised voices, marginalised topics, and undervalued music therapy approaches and applications. Importantly, certain traditional assignment types may privilege particular types of learners while disadvantaging others, and they may not provide sufficient flexibility for students to engage with non-dominant discourses and ways of being, learning, and doing. So, providing choice with respect to modes of expression and engagement can support a more inclusive and generative learning experience, especially when accompanied by a more inclusive approach to assessing participation. Class participation is an incredibly important way of making space for students to bring their lived knowledge to the teaching and learning space. So, offering diverse opportunities to participate, such as peer share in pairs, small group discussion, large group discussion, online forums, prepared debates, and artistic expression, can allow students to engage with and mobilise lived knowledge in diverse and accessible ways (Bruce, 2024) .

An increasing number of music therapist educators is engaging in activism of one sort or another with the intent of affecting change. Intersectionality, for example, is increasingly emphasised as a vital, but under-examined, concept that must be substantively explored if we are to grasp the intricate interplay of race, power structures, oppression, and privilege in our lives, society, and the music therapy profession at large (Webb, 2019). Future revisions of the practice domains forming the basis for the CBMT certification exam should incorporate lived knowledge as a valid indicator of competence in anti-oppressive practice, establishing it as a prerequisite for certification.

We similarly argue that educators must be increasingly attentive to the growing possibility that their internship and practicum-related partnerships may inadvertently communicate their support for clinical practices that do not align with their stated social justice commitment. We recognise that music therapy programs must collaborate with an array of governmental, private, and community organisations that inevitably embrace a wide range of practice philosophies to secure a sufficient number of student practicum placements. While less than ideal, we suggest that faculty activists might mobilise this reality as an opportunity to provide professional learning to their partners so that students feel supported to bring anti-oppressive practices, for example, to settings less familiar with what those practices offer. This may involve students, with the support of faculty supervisors and practicum coordinators, learning to assert the value of a different way of working. This can certainly lead to difficult conversations, but we argue it can also prompt the expansion of approaches in sites that have never engaged with the value of mobilising lived knowledge in practice contexts.

Potential challenges to implementation

Current guidelines for music therapy education and training programs have embedded biases about what constitutes desirable and valuable knowledge and skills for the profession - biases that we argue have led to a critical and chronic lack of diversity in the music therapy profession. For instance, proficiency on Western instruments defined in traditional terms that privilege the ability to read Western music notation can exclude self-taught musicians who may not read music, musicians who have learned within traditions that do not use Western music notation, or musicians who are not proficient on piano or guitar. There is no doubt that being a music therapist requires a high degree of music proficiency, but we argue that music proficiency is far too narrowly defined. This is not an easy discourse to change, particularly because certain instruments, like the piano, are deeply imbedded in specific music therapy methods. However, rethinking clinical musicianship could have important implications for the way music therapy competencies are articulated by professional organisations and, therefore, subsequently addressed in the curriculum. Diversifying instrument variety in music therapy education and training aligns with our responsibility to meet diverse client needs. Exposure to cultural diversity fosters increased awareness of the potential harms of cultural misappropriation. By understanding the histories and purposes of traditional instruments, we can avoid unintentionally silencing or disrespecting cultural traditions (Webb & Abrams, 2022). Ultimately, this cultural competency strengthens our ability to provide inclusive and effective care to our clients. Existing inequalities within many music education systems, we recognise, make this difficult to achieve because underrepresented groups face similar barriers to entering post-secondary education in general (Bruce, 2020). Because many music therapy training programs require prior post-secondary student experience or reside in post-secondary environments,

music therapy program changes alone will not transform the accessibility of the profession. Equity-related advocacy around high school music programs, for example, is needed, at both institutional and provincial levels (Pickard, 2022).

We also recognise that practicum and internship partnerships and collaborations can pose a particular challenge because students who are just learning to become music therapists often find it very difficult to assert the value of new and/or different ways of working within their sites. So, it is essential to consider how faculty supervisors and practicum coordinators can support students to work in alignment with anti-oppressive program expectations, succeed at their assigned practicum sites, and develop their own approach to the work. We cannot change every problematic system we encounter, especially within the contracted timeframe of an internship. So, we need clear and ethically-grounded decision-making frameworks that will help us decide if and/or when a specific collaboration/partnership must be dissolved to safeguard program integrity and the dignity of minoritised students while also attending to the welfare of therapy participants. Critically integrating diverse bodies of lived knowledge in the curriculum is, we suggest, one important strategy. Doing so can provide a foundation from which students can generate clinical reasoning that centres and values the therapy participant's experiences and expertise and potentially bridges the often felt gap between theory and practice (Bruce, 2024). Having clear clinical reasoning strategies that are critically informed by post-ableist, resource-oriented and anti-oppressive practice, research and theory can support advocacy efforts.

2. Clarifying the notion of safe-space in music therapy education and training

The music therapy classroom should be a place where students feel welcomed, valued, and where their perspectives and realities are centred. Yet, this does not always equate to feeling safe. Claims to the importance of making the classroom a "safe-space" (Baines, 2021; Edwards & Baines, 2022) often fail to articulate what is meant by safety in an educational context. Philosopher of education Eamonn Callan (2016) explains that

> there are as many kinds of safety as there are threats to the things that human beings might care about. That is why we need to be very clear about the specific threats of which the intended beneficiaries of safe space are supposed to be relieved. (p. 63)

He advocates for the provision of a dignity safe environment based on civility (Callan, 2011), while also arguing for the necessity of "intellectual unsafety" (Callan, 2016, p. 63), courage, and open-mindedness in educational contexts.

Students have dignity safety when they can engage in their learning without reasonable worries that they will be humiliated by others based on their intersecting social locators (Callan, 2016). This type of safe-space is necessary in educational contexts to make room for agonistic and plural ways of knowing and being. To ensure dignity safety in their classroom, music therapy educators and students can establish class guidelines around "boundaries, responding to student

feedback, providing support in and outside of the classroom, and avoiding behaviors that compromise [dignity] safety for students (e.g., belittling and shaming)" (Sewell, 2020, p. 13).

Unsafe intellectual spaces encourage open-mindedness, which "often take on an agonistic spirit as settled beliefs and values are subject to critique that some students will find distressing or exhilarating, or both at the same time" (Callan, 2016, p. 65). It asks that we take a close look at our core beliefs and values and question our assumptions in a search for potential biases (Venkatesh, 2023). One might argue that true critical education renders the possibility of having an intellectually safe classroom simply impossible. Supporting students to develop emotional awareness and regulation, then, may foster fruitful educational encounters of the intellectual unsafe kind. Music therapy educators "can support students in exploring, understanding, and learning to tolerate, regulate, and manage their emotional responses" (Sewell, 2020, p. 5); and in so doing, help them to build the capacity to withstand encounters with challenging ideas and materials.

In music therapy education contexts, we might witness a tension between our intent to foster the safety necessary to establish a trusting relationship in a therapeutic context and our intent to preserve the dignity safety necessary for intellectual unsafety encounters that enable critical learning to occur (Callan, 2016). It is important, then, to be particularly cautious about complying with demands for educational safe-spaces akin to the safe-space that is established in early therapeutic stages because it risks limiting necessary critical dialogue about the oppressive nature of some music therapy theories and practices. These critical discussions can support students to explore strategies for having difficult conversations with therapy participants and other relevant stakeholders; such conversations may include how music can be harnessed to explore difficult topics towards therapeutic change in clinical practice.

Enacting the policy

To enact this policy, music therapy educators must engage their students in critical conversations about pluralistic and agonistic dialogue and the value they bring to teaching and learning environments. This can be done through a specific provision in a course syllabus, which is then discussed openly in class. Here is an example of a call for action used in the syllabus of a graduate disability studies course:

> Acknowledgement is an important first step, but it must be followed by intentional antiracist, anticolonial, and anti-ableist action. This course is an explicitly activist endeavor where we will work collaboratively to de-centre and destabilize the dominance of deficit disability discourses and of scholarly and community activism grounded in experiences and analyses of disability and ableism from the global north. Within a teaching and learning space that values reciprocity and calls us all to be engaged and committed learners, I aim to centre diverse experiences of and perspectives on disability and activism for radical transformation; and I invite everyone to take up the challenge of learning from the tensions and opportunities that inevitably emerge when we bring diverse ways of knowing and being into conversation with one another. (Bruce, 2023, p. 1)

Another example from Bruce (personal communication, April 6, 2023) centres a weekly class discussion based on a "wicked problem," from students' weekly journals – a problem with no clear solution. This can assist students to complicate their thinking about the issue, to think from multiple perspectives, and to experience the discomfort such questioning can bring. It offers a space for experimentation that is supportive of mistakes while, at the same time, being unwaveringly committed to protecting the dignity safety of all.

One last way to enact this policy is through inviting guest lecturers with diverse positionalities and viewpoints on social justice issues. This can be facilitated at course, departmental or even faculty-wide levels.

Facilitating pluralistic and agonistic dialogic encounters is not without risk. In the evocative article "The interdependence of racial justice and free speech for racists," Strossen (2021) argues for the importance of free speech for all despite the potential harm hateful speech may bring, arguing that "while hateful speech may silence minority voices, censorship will certainly do so" (p. 62). In this way, building capacity and resiliency in the face of dissent can be a central part of social justice advocacy. One strategy to build capacity in music therapy education contexts is to centre self-care.

Self-care refers to the act of caring for one-self in the hope of restoring, maintaining, and/or improving one's health and well-being. Self-care has been theorised in music therapy as both a human right's issue and a professional responsibility (Kunimura, 2022). It is viewed as a human rights issue as "every human being is born worthy of compassion, kindness, and love from others and from oneself" (Kunimura, 2022, p. 188). It is a professional responsibility because the lack of self-care may lead to occupational burn-out, which may have negative impacts on the people we work with (Kunimura, 2022). The CAMT code of ethics also acknowledges self-care as an important part of responsible practice. Kunimura (2022) highlights the relevance of self-care in relation to activist burn-out, stating that "self-care's historical roots can be traced back to the civil rights movements and feminist political movements in the 1960s and 1970s [where it] supported a collective capacity for the hard work required for significant social change" (p. 188).

Music therapy educators can teach, model, and practice self-care using diverse pedagogical strategies. For example, educators could include a self-care statement in their syllabi; provide links to relevant resources on their learning management system; include a self-care module in their course; and engage students in discussions around barriers to self-care. Educators should also be mindful of workload (within and across courses) and build flexibility into the course syllabi (e.g., flexible deadline or assignment submission formats) to account for the diversity of student experiences. In the context of music therapy supervision, Brault (personal communication, March 20, 2024) includes a "self-care intention" as part of the weekly supervision agenda. This brings the issue of self-care to the fore front, providing a forum where students can resource one another about the types of self-care experiences that they find helpful (or not).

Potential challenges to implementation

While the importance of addressing difficult topics in the classroom is evident, music therapy educators may not feel equipped to facilitate such conversations. One possible way to support educators is through pluralistic dialogue facilitation training. An excellent example of this can be found in the massive open online course (MOOC) *From Hate to Hope: Building Understanding and*

Resilience (2018) created by Concordia University, Canada's Project SOMEONE (Social Media Education Every Day), in partnership with the UNESCO Chair in the Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism. Amongst other topics, the course emphasises the potential of pluralistic dialogues to build resilience, and the importance of skillful and respectful facilitation in educational and organisational contexts. The following elements of facilitation are presented: (a) Observing group dynamics and monitoring discussions to foster respectful, pluralistic dialogue where everyone has a chance to be heard; (b) giving feedback to encourage reflexivity with regards to the content and process of the discussion; (c) encouraging participants to summarise important points in their own discussions; (d) bringing new perspectives and suggesting the exploration of held assumptions to help participants move through an in-pass; (e) disclosing personal stories that make room for both dominant and counter-narratives in relation to the issue; (f) reframing to assist participants in clearly articulating their viewpoint; and (g) modelling the values that are hoped to be developed, such as acknowledging where one's knowledge may be limited and owning up to mistakes (Project SOMEONE & UNESCO Chair in Prevention of Radicalisation and Violent Extremism, 2018, sec. 3.4).

Another possible challenge is that music therapy educators may fear being called out for the promotion of pluralism, being cancelled, or losing their professional standing as a result of backlash against the fostering of dissension that such pluralism promotes. Given the current political climate in higher education (Kennedy & Volokh, 2021), this fear is legitimate. In fact, much academic and popular dialogue expresses great concern regarding the current consequences that recent "cancel culture" trends have had on academic freedom and freedom of speech (Callan, 2016; Ng, 2022; Norris, 2020a). In particular, issues related to censorship have stirred controversy across disciplines (Harper's Magazine, 2020). Professors have lost employment over discussions of controversial topics and works, and over the mention of epithets in the classroom (Kennedy & Volokh, 2021). Elsewhere, social work educators Carello and Butler (2015) advocate for trauma-informed educational practices (TIEP), which provide students with the necessary conditions and tools to be able to engage with difficult topics. They add that "the goal of TIEP is to remove possible barriers to learning, not to remove traumatic, sensitive, or difficult material from the curriculum" (Carello & Butler, 2015, p. 265). They highlight the importance of "teaching self-care, titrating exposure, eliciting and responding both emotionally and intellectually to student feedback, creating networks of support both in and out of the classroom, being mindful of power imbalances, and maintaining effective boundaries" (Carello & Butler, 2015, p. 266) as useful strategies when addressing triggering materials in the classroom.

3. Leveraging arts-based social pedagogies in music therapy education and training

The notion of social pedagogy provides a helpful frame with which to consider issues of pluralism and social justice in educational contexts. Informed by Freire's (2010, 1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, social pedagogy refers to the inclusive and reflexive co-creation of interventions and strategies to better magnify the voices of marginalised communities that have been undermined due to systemic discrimination that accompany hierarchies of knowledge and power (Nelson & Venkatesh, 2024). It aims to support individuals with the key competencies necessary to face

injustices encountered in everyday life in both physical and digital ecologies (Hämäläinen, 2015). Nelson and Venkatesh (2024) argue that the enactment of social pedagogy necessitates reflexivity and willingness to engage in uncomfortable conversations. They explain that social pedagogues "are responsible for welcoming opposing views with attention being paid to equipping our learners with the critical thinking and cognitive tools necessary for dissection of ideas and not a character assassination of those who propose those ideas" (Nelson & Venkatesh, 2024, p. 20). This aligns powerfully with the work of political theorist Chantale Mouffe who argues for an "agonistic pluralism model of democracy" (Mouffe, 1999, p. 754), which centres the necessity to make room for dissent in order to allow for the questioning of ever changing hegemonic orders. She explains that:

> what is at stake in the agonistic struggle is the very configuration of power relations around which a given society is structured. It is a struggle between opposing hegemonic projects which can never be reconciled rationally. An agonistic conception of democracy requires coming to terms with the contingent character of the hegemonic politicoeconomic articulations which determine the specific configuration of a society at a given moment. (Mouffe, 2007, p. 3)

A commitment to engaging in agonistic encounters that do not aim to establish consensus at all cost is not only at the centre of a radically democratic society (Laclau & Mouffe, 1987), but it can also counteract "othering" and the harm it can bring. As such, social pedagogues use pluralistic dialogues to critically examine the cognitive-affective dimensions present when encountering divergent opinions, as well as to counter hate and move beyond polarisation (Venkatesh, 2019).

Arts-based critical pedagogies may act as an important catalyst for fostering pluralism in educational spaces because they have the ability to make space for diverse ways of being, knowing, and learning. Chappell and Chappell (2016) define critical arts-based pedagogies as the incorporation of arts practices within an inquiry process aimed at "building critical thought and social cohesion" (p. 292). Arts-based pedagogies ask students to critically engage with cognitive and affective domains as both artists and audience members, to distill themes and ideas into specific works of art, to practice problem-solving and interpretation skills, to engage in multicultural exchange and appreciation, as well as to learn through multiple modalities and literacies (Chappell & Chappell, 2016, p. 301). Art engagement also offers a space to explore metaphors and apprehend conflicting feelings and thoughts. In relation to fostering pluralistic dialogues on social justice issues, critical artistic practices can be disruptive, bringing to the fore the repressive character of hegemonic systems (Mouffe, 2007). These practices are crucial to a radical democratic project, because they "contribute to the construction of new subjectivities" (Mouffe, 2007, p. 6).

Critical arts-based pedagogies often engage aesthetic distancing, which may be key in leveraging the arts for social change. Aesthetic distancing refers to the use of art processes to achieve a balance between emotional and cognitive responses to allow for reflection and perspective-taking in relation to a viewpoint or event (Bleuer et al., 2018; Landy, 1996). This concept is used more widely in the field of dramatherapy, where it has been recognised as an important mechanism of change (Sajnani, 2016). Aesthetic distancing involves "the use of fiction, storytelling, metaphors, symbols, masks, and other forms of aesthetic process [...] to help people modulate between overly emotional, underdistanced states, and overly rational, overdistanced states" (Bleuer

et al., 2018, p. 7). This is particularly useful when addressing social justice issues through the arts because of the level of affective and cognitive discomfort that can come from engaging with difficult topics. Aesthetic distancing can also provide the "opportunity to view the challenge of co-existence through [a] relational lens and to draw on [its meaning-making potential] to extend circles of compassion and solidarity and to mobilize action where warranted" (Sajnani, 2016, p. 155).

Enacting the policy

One way to enact this policy is to foster critical artistic reflection on the oppressive roles music has played in different contexts. In the book *Music of Hate, Music for Healing: Paired Stories from the Hate Music Industry and the Profession of Music Therapy*, Ficken (2020) explores ways in which music has been harnessed to promote varied hate-based ideologies and actions, and how music therapy may be a locale for de-radicalisation work. This book is particularly compelling from an educational standpoint because it explores, through songs, the multiple forms of discrimination and the notion of radicalisation – a topic rarely addressed in music therapy circles. Given that we are living in an increasingly polarised world, issues related to radicalisation and extremism will become more common in clinical spheres (Ng, 2011).

Critically reflecting on the eurocentrism and patriarchy of current post-secondary music education (Karlsen & Väkevä, 2012) can also be of particular interest. For instance, the lack of representation of women and other minoritised composers is insufficiently challenged (Topaz et al., 2022). These sorts of biases may be present in the musical education students received, and it is important to make these biases conscious as music therapists hold great responsibility regarding the music that is used in music therapy contexts. In *Music for Women (Survivors of Violence): A Feminist Music Therapy Interactive eBook*, Curtis (2019) proposes a program for women survivors of violence called "Stronger," which centres the use of women's music. This therapeutic choice is meaningful because it values the diverse lived experiences and art of women as a legitimate source of knowledge and a powerful therapeutic medium. These two books are examples of rich educational resources that can be harnessed in the music therapy classroom to explore the role music may play in propagating harmful ideologies and opportunities for healing and transformation.

Potential challenges to implementation

Students may feel detached or have difficulty bridging what is experienced through the arts and the practice of music therapy (Winner et al., 2013). Students may also come to the programs with varying levels of fluidity related to using the arts for meaning-making. Part of the challenge for music therapy educators is to facilitate flexible, integrative arts-based experiences that can make space for diverse learners. Scholarship from the field of expressive arts therapies may be of particular interest here. For instance, the Person-Centered Expressive Arts Therapy (PCEAT) approach developed by Nathalie Rogers (1993) highlights the potential for intermodal, sequential artistic engagement to help people experience different perspectives on a given issue. During the "creative connection process" (Rogers, 1993, p. 4), art modes stimulate and nurture one another, bringing us to our inner essence by stripping away at layers of inhibitions inculcated by modern society. Another important dimension of the PCEAT approach is its contribution to social change and peace. In an interview with Tony Merry (1997), Rogers explains that the expressive arts process, which stimulates creativity, empathy

and promotes self-empowerment, presents an avenue to examine and alter the negative aspects of our existence. This approach also enables individuals to engage in responsible, democratic, and collaborative actions towards a more sustainable world. She believes that enhanced self-acceptance and self-understanding allows people to become more compassionate and more connected to the welfare of others and of the planet; it allows us to build community that truly values pluralism.

CONCLUSION

To meaningfully enact increasingly articulated social justice commitments in the Canadian music therapy community, music therapy classrooms must be places where difficult conversations are expected and encouraged. When facilitated skilfully with an ethos of agonism, the benefits of having difficult conversations, founded upon a deep respect for diversity, far outweigh the risks associated with sending new professionals out into the world with harmful ideas informed by ableist, patriarchal, racist, and colonial views. To make this possible, three policies were proposed. The first requires the intentional integration of lived knowledge into music therapy recruitment processes, hiring practices, curricula, and community partnerships. The second challenged the notion of safe-space in the classroom, highlighting the importance of ensuring the dignity safety of students through civility, while making space for pluralistic dialogues and dissent through a valuing of open-mindedness. The third highlighted the promise of arts-based social pedagogies for questioning hegemonic practices and the potential of aesthetic distancing and intermodal artistic participation to fuel social change. We hope that our suggested strategies for enacting these policies have sparked the imagination of music therapy educators and contributed to re-envisioning the role education can and must play in fostering movement toward a more inclusive and welcoming profession. As previously noted, our goal with this article was not to present a definitive and exhaustive list of policies, but to initiate a dialogue about the significance of educational pluralism in music therapy education. We also aimed to democratise the policy-making process and emphasise educators' responsibility to engage in the difficult yet necessary process of systemic change for a more socially just profession (Schmidt, 2009). We are confident that our proposals are applicable across occidental music therapy training programs inasmuch as the issues encountered in the Canadian context including increased populist rhetoric, divisions across political ideologies and other sensitive topics are mirrored elsewhere in the Western world. Importantly, our framing of policy orientations in arts-based contexts can offer valuable insights for professionals in adjacent fields, such as arts education, art history, studio practices, and design, where the relationship between lived experience, pedagogical approaches and creativity plays a key role in shaping curriculum development.

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Ελληνική περίληψη | Greek abstract

Ο ρόλος του πλουραλισμού στην προαγωγή ενός ήθους κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης: Συστάσεις πολιτικής για την εκπαίδευση και κατάρτιση στη μουσικοθεραπεία

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ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Η πρόσφατη επιστημονική έρευνα, με επίκεντρο την κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη και την εναντίωση στην καταπίεση, έχει απαιτήσει την ευρύτερη και πιο σκόπιμη ένταξη κριτικών αναλύσεων και κονστρουκτιβιστικών επιστημολογικών πλαισίων για την προώθηση της ισότητας, της διαφορετικότητας, της συμπερίληψης, της προσβασιμότητας και της αποαποικιοποίησης στην εκπαίδευση και την κατάρτιση στη μουσικοθεραπεία. Η πρόσφατη διεύρυνση του περιεχομένου της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης στον αναθεωρημένο κώδικα ηθικής και δεοντολογίας της Καναδικής Ένωσης Μουσικοθεραπευτών (Canadian Association of Music Therapists, CAMT) είναι ένα βήμα προς τη σωστή κατεύθυνση. Απαιτεί από τους πιστοποιημένους μουσικοθεραπευτές να εντοπίζουν, να κατανοούν και να εξαλείφουν ενεργά τις σιωπηρές προκαταλήψεις και τις πρακτικές διακρίσεων και να καλλιεργούν την επίγνωση των βλαβών που έχουν προκληθεί από καταπιεστικές πρακτικές εντός και εκτός του επαγγέλματος. Υποστηρίζουμε, εδώ, ότι η προετοιμασία των σπουδαστών μουσικοθεραπείας ώστε να ανταποκρίνονται στα επαγγελματικά πρότυπα πρακτικής και να συμβαδίζουν με τις ηθικές αρχές που εστιάζουν στην κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη όπως διατυπώνονται στον κώδικα δεοντολογίας απαιτεί από τα καναδικά εκπαιδευτικά προγράμματα μουσικοθεραπείας να ενσωματώνουν σκόπιμα τη διαφωνία ως βασική πτυχή της κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης σε ολόκληρο το πρόγραμμα σπουδών τους. Στο πλαίσιο αυτού του κριτικού στοχασμού, υποστηρίζουμε ότι η κινητοποίηση μιας δέσμευσης προς μία εκπαίδευση κοινωνικής δικαιοσύνης πρέπει πρώτα απ' όλα να πηγάζει από ένα πλουραλιστικό ήθος, το οποίο εκτιμά τους διαφορετικούς τρόπους ύπαρξης, σκέψης, μάθησης και γνώσης. Στη συνέχεια, διερευνούμε την κριτική ενσωμάτωση της βιωμένης γνώσης, τις

έννοιες της ασφάλειας της αξιοπρέπειας και της διανοητικής ανασφάλειας στους εκπαιδευτικούς χώρους και τις κοινωνικές παιδαγωγικές που βασίζονται στις τέχνες, ως δυνητικά μεταμορφωτικές πρακτικές στην κοινωνικά δίκαιη εκπαίδευση μουσικοθεραπείας.

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εκπαίδευση στη μουσικοθεραπεία, κοινωνική παιδαγωγική, κριτικές σπουδές για την αναπηρία, κώδικας ηθικής και δεοντολογίας, κοινωνική δικαιοσύνη, πλουραλισμός