

EDITORIAL

Whose Voices? Whose Knowledge?

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Recently, members of the current *Voices* team (Journal Editors, Article Editors, Copy Editors, Production Editor) had an open discussion about how we can intentionally work beyond representation and towards substantial change when it comes to whose voices and whose knowledge are being amplified through *Voices* and what that communicates to sharers and receivers of knowledge in the music and health world. This conversation was initiated with the hopes of addressing the anti-Black racism that has been experienced in our interactions with editors, authors, and readers. We began the discussion in response to direct feedback from the guest editors of the Special Multi-disciplinary Issue on Black Aesthetics & the Arts Therapies about the anti-Black racism they experienced during their work with the *Voices* team on the issue. When we are faced with direct feedback it can often become an opportune moment to bring the conversation to the forefront. At the same time, we acknowledge that these conversations have been happening for centuries in various communities and geopolitical locations without being included in conversations in dominant music therapy spheres because of political, epistemological, and hegemonic structures inherent in the fields of science and humanities. As the *Voices* team continued to develop our emerging dialogue in our meeting and later through the chat in our group forum, there was a shift from the focus on anti-Black racism. It is important to note this shift and to continue to reflect on the ways that conversations shift and possible reasons why. While we will continue to grapple with the question of why we did not stay with the topic of anti-Black racism, that will not be discussed in this editorial. As the discussion between members of the *Voices* team evolved, some significant issues were raised, though they represent merely the tip of the iceberg. This collective editorial reflects an aggregate of several of the voices from our team, but certainly does not reflect all voices or all views. We realize this is the beginning of a long dialogical process that considers whose knowledge and

whose voices are attended to in music therapy, one we hope will open up and become richer and deeper over time, not just with the *Voices* team, but with the wider community.

When we look back on the history of the journal there are interesting moments of change that trace where we find ourselves at this moment. When Carolyn Kenny and Brynjulf Stige founded *Voices: A World Forum for Music Therapy* in 2001, they sought to establish both an international community and a journal. Acknowledging the cultural situatedness of music as a healing art, they recognized that local forms of knowledge generation are tied to local cultural and social understandings (Kenny & Stige, 2001). An international community for music therapy would therefore need to welcome and acknowledge these situated understandings and support a broad array of manifestations of such.

In choosing the name “Voices,” Kenny and Stige aimed to hold space for “multi-voiced discourses” (Kenny & Stige, 2001, p.3) that represented the manifold of the international music therapy community. Contributors were invited to make their voices heard, as well as voice their opinions and their perspectives. The online community adopted a variety of discursive¹ formats to facilitate avenues for dialogue and reflection, including essays, interviews, practice-oriented papers, and columns related to specific contexts and practice in particular countries. The founders made an intentional choice to exclude research as a genre for submissions, out of concern that inclusion of such might push the journal towards a hegemonic, Western understanding of knowledge generation and dissemination.

A member of this editorial collective shared their experience when they first came into music therapy and how at first they did not feel there was a space for their way of knowing: Within a short period of being excited about music therapy, I became disillusioned by the seeming negation of the poetics. As a person who hails from a mythopoetic culture, the pseudo positivist stance of music therapy that passes for rigour and empiricism did not excite me. I know how important it is to read a news report, but why should it matter if it is plain speech. Then, I met the writings of Carolyn Kenny and *Voices* almost at the same time. Carolyn Kenny, in particular, appealed to my mythopoetic sensibilities. Because she identified herself as an indigenous practitioner, I could relate to the elemental mystical poetics she relied upon to convey the power of music beyond empiricism. In the field of play, she explicitly presented three fields—the aesthetic, the musical space, and the field of play as primary fields. These seamless fields exist in the essential element of being. “This is the ecology of being and the rhythm of vitality and growth. Within the field of play, we find four new fields—new horizons to explore,” she wrote (Kenny, 2014, para.38). If music therapy is an ecology of being, it allows participants to seamlessly integrate what happens in therapy and how they participate in their lifeworld. *Voices*, hosting Kenny’s enduring work, revitalised my enthusiasm for music therapy. It spoke to my ways of knowing.

In 2011, as the journal grew and as they acknowledged their own growth and change, Kenny and Stige brought on Cheryl Dileo as a third “editor-in-chief” as she had advocated for the importance of including research articles in *Voices* (Stige, 2011,, 2013). The choice to include “research” articles was important because of *Voices*’ open access status, which brought a range of different ways of generating knowledge to people who did not have access to “academic” journals in music therapy. At the time, the journal was divided into two sections: Original Voices and Research Voices. This dichotomy in some ways set up a division that may have also served as a hierarchy. For example, the practice of requiring two peer reviewers for research articles, while other article types required only one could insinuate that the former is considered to be more rigorous.

In 2014, when Katrina McFerran and Susan Hadley joined as journal editors (the new term that replaced “editors-in-chief” at that time) after Carolyn Kenny and Cheryl Dileo stepped away (Stige 2013), the division of *Voices* into two sections of the journal was ended in the hopes of reducing that perceived hierarchy of research articles over other forms of submissions. However, the review process has remained different

for research articles than for the other forms of knowledge production. Also in 2014, there was another shift in terms of broadening the language availability of abstracts, with the hopes of also broadening the language availability of articles, within the limitations of what characters/fonts the online journal system could support. The aim of this shift was to enable greater access for a wider array of *Voices* sharers and receivers of knowledge about music and health practices. Another shift was to change “Country of the Month” columns to a Wiki that members from that country could contribute to on an ongoing basis in order to make the process more communal and fluid. This Wiki is still in the process of development.

Twenty years after the initial launching of *Voices*, and 10 years after the inclusion of Research Voices, the *Voices* editorial team, with our members from 13 countries, finds ourselves questioning to what degree we actually create space for a full range of culturally-situated forms of knowledge production, and to what extent we engage in practices that oppress the very voices we hope to center. We therefore aim to explore where equity is lacking as we identify injustices and “radically imagine better ways of being together” (Thomas & Norris, 2021, para. 16).

Many changes that have occurred and continue to occur in *Voices*, including changes in personnel and changes in structure or format, have happened largely behind the scenes without transparency to those on the team or to readers until after decisions have been made. While decisions have been made with ideas of social equity in mind, the processes have often belied the stated mission and vision of *Voices*. The conversations that we are beginning to have are shining a light on this incongruence. The following are a few of the issues that members of the editorial team have brought to the discussion so far.

Voices is a reliable platform that music therapists in non-Western countries appreciate for its openness, internationality, and economical generosity. Music therapists in those countries, however, are often under pressure to adopt Western methods of empiricism, argumentative logic, and hierarchical academic practices in order to gain social status. This not only eliminates on-site practitioners from getting involved in the discussions, but also makes so many nuances in the field slip through its cracks. Many music therapists in countries located in the margins of the dominant culture of knowledge production in music therapy, who do important, valuable, and impactful clinical practice, are limited in expressing its value to the world by the sanctioned formats of expression in music therapy. It is not only because of their English ability, but more importantly, it is because of the difficulty to discern which part of their work is culture-specific and which part is universal music therapy. They just use their natural sense and rather fragmented knowledge imported from the foreign-learned music therapy. This mixture produces a lot of fruits and also things that don't make sense. In other words, it creates new ideas and raises many significant questions that are important to learn about. There is a necessity for us to recognize and understand what is “culture-specific” versus “universal” in order to distinctly express ourselves. If we do not: 1) we will continue to be either patriotic or Western-embracing forever, 2) music therapists at the margins of knowledge generation in music therapy will not be able to make themselves/ourselves understandable to the world, and 3) the world will continue to hold fixed images of “indigenous” and “exotic” cultures in music therapy, ones that have nothing to do with the dominant culture of music therapy. What is needed here is to develop new forms of knowledge creation that view/know/communicate what is happening more widely in music therapy while keeping standards of inquiry. And this might also offer a beneficial alternative to Western academism.

This issue of whose voices and whose knowledge are valued is not just about one attribute or measure, but a complex combination of them. It is important to have a process of staying in and continuing discussions on these issues that do not have easy answers, rather than providing a quick statement of a position or statement of “this or that.” One of the things that creates disparity and division is the sharing of information. Differences in who has what information and how much of it (not differences in knowledge or ability) all come down to the writing, editing, peer review, organization-

al meetings, and external dissemination of research papers. In very concrete terms, for example, Zoom meeting recordings or Facebook Live, with AI-translated subtitles, can help non-native English speakers to understand what was being communicated. What we say is important, but how we say it has to do with who we want to say it to and how we want to say it. This is just one example, but we need to be careful in communicating these things.

Some of the themes for reflection that we have so far identified as potential pathways to silencing voices and certain types of knowledge production include: the financial, cultural and emotional burden that is placed on non-English authors and readers to have access to the ideas published in the journal; the loss of cultural meanings, geopolitical stances, and epistemological postures that are inherent as we translate from an original language into English (Segato, 2017); and lastly how *Voices* can enter in relationship with, honor, and amplify different formats of knowledge dissemination preferred in non-hegemonic Western Cultures that sit in the margins and periphery in relation to whom are perceived as central producers of knowledge around the world.

In this respect, *Voices* could be the platform in which we celebrate and feature indigenous and diverse ways of creating knowledge. For instance, 散文 (prose) has been used as a means of communicating philosophy and inspiring reflection since the pre-Qin dynasty in China. We could also provide resources for authors in various countries to advocate for these different ways of knowledge creation with the various institutions they belong to.

The place of music for healing and expression has existed long before the formalised “music therapy” profession. Yet, there is an unconscious expectation to appropriate these teachings when including their influence in academic scholarship. To expect an author to seek out references to support their reflections of culture is to actively discount the sharing of lived experience and thus actively disregard the importance and diversity of cultural practices. Further, as safety is central to the sharing of our own voices, diverse knowledge generation must not only be accepted in the academic sphere, but also highly valued for its historical significance.

As a team, we are beginning to reflect more deeply as a collective whose voices and forms of knowledge are acknowledged and cited and whose are marginalized, trivialized, or insufficiently referenced. When thinking about Whose Voices? Whose Knowledge? we must also acknowledge the practice of intellectual theft and the erasure and displacement of ideas when sources are not cited. Claiming the ideas of others as one’s own has a long history globally, and one that is not unknown in music therapy. In recent years, with more access to ideas through virtual platforms, we have witnessed a variety of ways in which theft is occurring, from the republishing of entire articles under a different name, to plagiarism of ideas or use of grey materials without proper acknowledgement. As we continue to aspire for greater equity in the forms of knowledge disseminated in *Voices*, we make a continued commitment to work against the power structures that support the unacknowledged use of the ideas of others. Power structures to which we can either contribute to or challenge. As with many music therapy journals globally, we are currently working on guidelines and procedures that will hold authors accountable and ensure justice for those who have been wronged in the process of generating and disseminating knowledge.

The November issue has been in the making for months now (prior to our editorial discussions). We hope it is representative of our aim to create space for a broad range of culturally-situated understandings of music therapy, along with an inclusive conception of knowledge creation.

From outside of music therapy, Suzi Hutchings discusses the problems of using colonial health-care frameworks to work with communities disposed and marginalised through processes of colonisation. From the perspective of an Indigenous scholar with expertise in cultural anthropology and native title land claims in the context of so-called “Australia,” Hutchings also highlights the need for “cultural competence training” to go beyond exploration of non-white cultures and peoples. Instead, she argues that such training should examine whiteness as a construct, and how it underpins

systems of oppression which continue to impact Indigenous communities and other peoples of colour that the music therapy discipline engages in practice, research, and education.

Reflecting on a seven-month-long music therapy program with Sub-Saharan African adolescent asylum seekers in Barcelona, Spain, Salih Gulbay describes the value of Hip Hop to engage the complex needs of these young people. He details how, through this work, he has developed a new model informed by a variety of existing Hip Hop therapy approaches and trauma-informed approaches that he calls *Integral Hip Hop Methodology*. Written as a proposal for future research, Gulbay's article explores the value and potential of culturally sustaining music therapy work with undocumented youth.

Through the use of four composite case examples, Katelyn Beebe considers significant moments in music therapy for adults diagnosed with intellectual and developmental disabilities who use music for self-expression. The adults within the composite cases she describes use various forms of bodily and musical expression to convey their needs. Through improvisation, Beebe aims to share in this deep expression that is not reliant on the use of words. Beebe highlights how adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities use music and embodied expression to process a wide range of emotions and how the music therapist can use experiences of countertransference and consideration of interactional patterns to better understand the nature of such expression.

From India, a country with a very long tradition of using music and sound for healing, Priyanka Singh explores the range of current music therapy practices. Through a survey of music therapists and music healers, Singh maps the current status of education, practice, and research; and contrasts their findings with the perspectives and research of renowned music therapy scholar Nishindra Kinjalk. The interplay among ancient Indian music healing practices and modern conceptions of the music therapy profession forms a key feature of Singh's findings and has implications for other cultural contexts with rich sound healing traditions.

Through dialogue between two professional colleagues in Norway, Simon Gilbertson and David Hebert collaboratively develop an autoethnography of the experience of concussion and the associated dislocated and disorienting experience of music and of temporality thereafter. This voiced experiential narrative moves between lived experiences and future imagined ones from perspectives of both the injured and the carer. The authors transform their collaborative process of inquiry into an autoethnographic narrative that enables the reader to experience how temporality (including the perception of sounds through time) is fragmented and reconstituted when one undergoes and recovers from concussion.

Rivka Elkoshi describes an ethnographic study of the use of Israeli music therapist and composer Stella Lerner's non-collaborative song-based music therapy approach, "Portrait Song" with school children. Within the "Portrait Song" approach, the music therapist composes lyrics and music and then teaches these by rote to clients for therapeutic purposes. Elkoshi evaluates the use of "Portrait Song" with school children, many of whom benefit from adaptations to promote learning, and concludes that this approach can be conceived of as a motivating first step on a continuum from non-collaborative to collaborative songwriting in music therapy.

In a study comprising of three surveys, Edward A. Roth, Xueyan Hua, Wang Lu, Jordan Blitz Novak, Fei Wang, Taylorlyn N. Mehnert, Rebekah K. Morano, Alycia J. Sterenberg Mahon, and Jennifer Fiore explore the experience of clinical training in music therapy, from both the students' and supervisors' perspectives. The research, conducted in the US, explored perceptions of the needs of interns, feelings of preparedness and expectations, and satisfaction with clinical training. While they found inconsistencies in experiences in and perceptions of training, they found that students are generally satisfied with their clinical training.

Finally, Susan Hadley provides a review of Canadian music therapist, Sandra Curtis's new book, *Music for Women (Survivors of Violence): A Feminist Music Therapy Inter-*

active eBook, a book designed with three target audiences in mind—women in general, professionals who work with women survivors of male violence, and music therapists.

As we conclude this collective editorial, we would like to welcome two new members to the *Voices* team: 吉原 奈美 (Nami Yoshihara, Japan) as Article Editor and Heather Wagner (USA) as Copy Editor. We look forward to the perspectives they will bring and to their participation in our evolving questioning of *Whose Voices? Whose Knowledge?*

Notes

1. Here indicating “relating to discourse or modes of discourse” (“Discursive”, n.d., para. 2)

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