

POSITION PAPER | PEER REVIEWED

Ethical Considerations in United States of America Music Therapy Higher Education

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Abstract

At the undergraduate level, music therapy education includes the academic experiences of budding music therapists. For students to reach their highest degree of self-fulfillment, they must be educated in a safe and secure environment which has their best interests in mind. Undergraduate students, many of whom are in the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, are at a point of development in which mentorship is still necessary. The purpose of this position paper was to consider areas in music therapy education and clinical training which may lead to harm and provide suggestions which could ameliorate the threats to them. Based on the analysis shared in this position paper, it is imperative that music therapy instructors take the following action steps: (a) prevention of faculty appropriation of student intellectual property; (b) preventative measures against oppression, harassment, and sexual harassment; and (c) reassessment of the current music therapy internship structure.

Keywords: ethics; music therapy; higher education; undergraduate

Author's Lens

I am a Taiwanese American woman with a disability and a bachelor's degree in music therapy from a university in the Western part of the United States of America. Throughout my years of music therapy coursework, internship, and work experience, I have been exposed to many of the flaws of music therapy education and clinical training, and issues with the higher-education structure. It is imperative to fill the gap in the extant literature to shine a light on many of the shortcomings and instances of harm within music therapy education and clinical training to better the education future students will receive.

The purpose of undergraduate music therapy education is to nurture and develop the raw potential of individuals, typically in emerging adulthood, to aid their progression into full adulthood, and support their career development so they can one day be effective

Board-Certified Music Therapists.¹ Most undergraduate students, typically between the ages of 18 and 23, are in a stage of emerging adulthood, a time of exploration in which both their personal and professional futures are unknown (Arnett, 2000). When they face situations which threaten their sense of safety and security, they may be prevented from reaching their full potential (Schutte, 2018). Thus, the purpose of this position paper was to discuss ethical considerations and to provide suggestions which could ameliorate possible threats to safety and security that may occur in music therapy education and clinical training.

Music Therapy Undergraduate Education

In the United States of America (USA), an undergraduate music therapy degree program offers an education which covers three main competency areas: clinical foundations, music therapy foundations, and musical foundations. These areas are established in the *Standards of Education and Clinical Training* (SECT; American Music Therapy Association [AMTA], 2021), and students are expected to master them through a combination of coursework and direct and indirect clinical experiences. To be eligible for the board certification exam, undergraduate students must complete bachelor's coursework, and engage in clinical experiences which focus on music therapy theory and techniques prior to being eligible for graduation² (American Music Therapy Association, n.d.-a). "The Approved Curriculum for the baccalaureate degree in music therapy includes coursework in music therapy, psychology, music, biological, social and behavioral sciences, disabling conditions and general studies" (American Music Therapy Association, n.d.-a, "The Approved Curriculum" section).

Throughout their undergraduate education, music therapy students in the USA undergo a minimum of 1,200 hours of direct³ and indirect⁴ clinical experiences during their years of academic coursework and post-coursework internship experience (American Music Therapy Association, 2021b). A minimum of 180 clinical hours are required to be completed during coursework, and at least 900 hours must occur during internship (American Music Therapy Association, 2021b).

Practicum (i.e., pre-internship fieldwork) experiences involve practical clinical experience as well as theoretical study (Goodman, 2011). Practicum typically involves a period of observation followed by full or partial clinical responsibilities in a variety of clinical settings (e.g., older adults, adult mental health, hospice) under the guidance of a Board-Certified Music Therapist (MT-BC) affiliated with a university.

Similarly, the music therapy internship, which is the final step in music therapy education, provides pre-professional music therapists the opportunity to apply their theoretical understanding of music therapy to everyday clinical practice, under the supervision of an MT-BC. Any facility (e.g., memory care facility, children's hospital, mental health facility) or private practice which provides music therapy and employs an MT-BC meeting the minimum qualifications of being an internship director, is eligible to become a National Roster internship site by completing an application process (American Music Therapy Association, 2017). Students may also complete their internship in university affiliated internship sites, in which universities develop direct contractual relationships with specific music therapy businesses, healthcare institutions, or individual music therapists who satisfy guidelines established by the American Music Therapy Association (American Music Therapy Association, 2021a).⁵

Despite the rigorous competency guidelines of undergraduate coursework and the internship experiences, there are few ethical guidelines that have been established for faculty members or practicum and internship supervisors who facilitate the learning process, impart knowledge, and provide mentorship. The existing AMTA Code of Ethics language establishing its applicability in academic settings is vague at best.⁶ Moreover, if

educators or clinical supervisors choose not to be an AMTA member (which they are not required to be unless they are a national roster internship director or supervisor), they are not beholden to the AMTA Code of Ethics.

Music Therapy Student Developmental Needs in Emerging Adulthood

Music therapy undergraduate students, most of whom are between the ages of 18 and 23, are experiencing their first instances of independence. This may be the first time they are living apart from their parents and they have the freedom to explore the world, largely without oversight. To better understand the psychological aspects of individuals in this age group, we must first gain an understanding of emerging adulthood itself.

Most individuals in industrialized societies currently enrolled at higher education institutions fall within the developmental stage of emerging adulthood, which spans from the years of 18 to 29 (Arnett, 2000; Germani et al., 2020; Murray & Arnett, 2019; Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2020; Syed, 2016). Murray and Arnett (2019) posited this developmental stage arose in the latter part of the twentieth century since the transition to full adulthood was postponed in industrialized countries, with parenthood, marriage, and other adult roles occurring later in life (Syed, 2016). For individuals from middle-class or upper-class backgrounds, the marked transitional events, (e.g., leaving parental home, entering marriage, starting one's career) have been complex, late, and protracted (Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2020); therefore, emerging adults are stuck in an age with no firm place, as they are neither adolescents nor full adults.

Syed (2016) defines five distinctive features of emerging adulthood: (a) identity exploration, (b) instability, (c) possibilities, (d) self-focus, and (e) feeling in-between. *Identity exploration* involves individuals searching to find meaning in work, relationships, and ideologies. *Instability* refers to young people's tendencies to change residences, jobs, and relationships more frequently than other times. *Possibilities*, which capture the optimistic spirit of emerging adulthood, refer to the many options that emerging adults see before them. *Self-focus* refers to emerging adults' relative freedom from obligations to parents, spouses, and children, allowing them to pay greater attention to their own lives. *Feeling in-between* is indicative of the subjective experience of emerging adults who acknowledge feeling not quite like adolescents any longer but also not yet fully like adults (Syed, 2016). Thus, many undergraduate students are in an unstable, self-focused, developmental stage in which they explore numerous possibilities and passions.

Undergraduate students in emerging adulthood are in a stage of life in which reciprocal interpersonal relationships can lead to mutual satisfaction, aid the person in developing themselves as an individual, and help them discover their potential (Germani et al., 2020). However, research has shown that any strain or anxiety within these relationships, whether they be personal or professional can lessen the feelings of achieved adulthood (Reio & Sanders-Reio, 2020). Thus, in an academic setting, negative interpersonal relationships with faculty members, practicum supervisors, or internship supervisors can decrease feelings of achievement and affect emerging adults' futures. To this end, it may be helpful for academic instructors (i.e., faculty members and practicum/internship supervisors) to have a national, standardized ethical code so they can act as a positive influence in undergraduate students' development. Without this requirement, instructors' conduct remains unchecked, and students may fail to reach their full potential due to harm caused in this sensitive stage of development.

Disrupted Development

The sensitivity of emerging adults' development is apparent in the interpersonal interactions they have with others in academia. When faculty and staff demonstrate

unethical conduct, it has a negative impact on the affected students. This may be amplified for students who previously experienced Adverse Childhood Events (ACEs).⁷ ACEs lead to poor health outcomes, mental health concerns, and low social development (D'Costa et al., 2021). As faculty and staff are often unaware of students' backgrounds unless it is overtly shared, it is important that faculty and staff avoid traumatizing or retraumatizing students, as well as learn to identify when students are experiencing professional or personal distress. Thus, the creation of a standardized ethical code of conduct may protect many students from harm. Although a Code of Ethics cannot prevent the traumatization or retraumatization of students, by mandating the use of a trauma-informed teaching style and requiring ethical behavior, harm to students can be minimized.

Existing Ethical Codes and Educational Standards

Currently, there are few existing ethical codes and educational standards to guide the conduct of faculty members, internship/practicum supervisors and directors, and other stakeholders involved in music therapy students' education to avoid disrupted development, traumatization, or retraumatization. Therefore, the purpose of this position paper was to discuss ethical considerations and to provide suggestions for ameliorating threats to safety and security that may occur in the context of music therapy education and training. A summary of the few extant, applicable codes now follows.

First, the AMTA Code of Ethics (CoE) (American Music Therapy Association, 2019) establishes five main ethical principles: (a) respect the dignity and rights of all, (b) act with compassion, (c) be accountable, (d) demonstrate integrity and veracity, and (e) strive for excellence. The CoE also establishes eight guiding principles for the profession: kindness, social responsibility, dignity/respect, equality, accountability, excellence, integrity, and courage (American Music Therapy Association, 2019). Those who hold the MT-BC credential and are members of AMTA, as well as students and interns under clinical supervision, are required to uphold the AMTA CoE in their clinical practice. However, educators work in a gray area. Music therapy educators must be MT-BCs, and most are AMTA members when working in academic programs that are approved by AMTA. Thus, the assumption is that the CoE applies to them. While this helps ensure that students meet competencies in terms of the safety and security of clients, the CoE language concerning the treatment of music therapy students is minimal and vague. Examples of vague CoE language include sections 1.7,⁸ 1.11,⁹ and 5.4.¹⁰ Although sections 1.7 and 1.11 require educators and supervisors to follow state/national laws and not to engage in sexual relations with students, section 5.4 utilizes the term "positive role model," without an operational definition. Additionally, the treatment of students/interns within minoritized communities is not referenced.¹¹ At the time this position paper was authored, the US music therapy community was experiencing a time of flux in which the national organization (i.e., AMTA) was undergoing a restructuring process, which may have affected the existing educational system.

Similarly, the National Association of Schools of Music (NASM) does not provide any specific code of conduct required for music educators. The *NASM Handbook* (2021) outlines that each university has the responsibility of ensuring their faculty members, staff, and administrators demonstrate ethical behavior that follows all necessary operational procedures, in addition to following the *NASM Rules of Practice and Procedure* and *Code of Ethics*. The *NASM Code of Ethics* charges educators with: (a) upholding each institution's operational and ethical procedures; (b) utilizing NASM standards to recruit new students; (c) awarding financial aid according to the procedures of each university; (d) avoiding the recruitment of a student presently enrolled in another institution; (e) avoiding last-minute disruptions in faculty coverage at specific institutions; (f) following rules specified by NASM if parties involved in any alleged violations cannot be resolved; and (g) the Code of

Ethics can be amended by a two-third vote of members (National Association of Schools of Music, 2021). Interestingly, many universities do not publish a code of conduct for faculty members, supervisors, or staff, thus NASM does not seem to provide students a level of protection against unethical behavior by faculty. Like the NASM Code of Ethics, the AMTA SECT does not seem to provide ethical guidelines for music therapy educators.

In the SECT, the AMTA (2021) reports the requirements a university must satisfy to create or maintain an AMTA-approved music therapy academic program. For example, AMTA indicates the general standards for academic institutions, such as specifying the objectives and rationale for each of the music therapy degree programs offered by the given institution. The SECT also specifies the necessary components of a competency-based education; the standards for each level of education (i.e., Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral degrees); necessary qualifications of academic faculty, pre-internship supervisors, and internship supervisors; standards for quality assurance; and specific guidelines for music therapy distance academic programs. However, no section of the document delineates the way music therapy faculty members or internship/practicum supervisors are required to treat their students/interns. If a faculty member or clinical supervisor exhibits ethics violations and is a member of the AMTA, students have the option to file a complaint through the national association.^{12,13} However, if a faculty member or clinical supervisor exhibits ethics violations and is not a member of the AMTA, music therapy students have little protection or basis to file complaints through their national association, which leads to instances of harm. Even in cases where individuals have filed complaints, the resulting response of the AMTA Ethics committee have led to further instances of harm, disillusionment, and eroded trust (Murakami, 2021).

Many universities do have faculty/staff conduct agreements, which are preventative measures for unethical behavior. However, in extreme cases of unethical behavior, codes for dismissal are based on the vague concept of "just cause." Just cause, in regard to the dismissal of a tenured or non-tenured faculty member, is based on a demonstrated dishonesty or incompetence in research or teaching, a negligence of their duty, and severely impaired personal conduct which prevents them from adequately fulfilling their responsibilities at the given academic institution (Euben, 2004). In addition, by definition, "tenure" is an indefinite appointment with the purpose of safeguarding professors' academic freedom and preventing censorship in their research findings, speech, and publications. Tenure is meant to allow professors to pursue innovation and research without political or corporate pressure (American Association of University Professors, n.d.). Therefore, tenured faculty members are meant to be dismissed only in the most egregious circumstances, such as program discontinuation or financial demand (i.e., retrenchment; Dutt-Ballerstadt, 2021). As a result, even if a tenured faculty member demonstrates grievous conduct, it is difficult for them to be considered for dismissal. Due to the vague nature of various codes of conduct, it is challenging for students to navigate the system even when faced with grievances which should warrant corrective action (e.g., faculty appropriation of student intellectual property,¹⁴ sexual harassment).

Safety and Security Concerns in Music Therapy Education and Clinical Training

To reach their full potential, in undergraduate music therapy academic and clinical experiences, music therapy students must be educated in a safe, secure, and trusting environment. These safety and security needs often differ from needs held prior to college as this is frequently the first time students are living as a single adult; thus, it is their first taste of independence. College students, like all others, need to feel a basic sense of safety for survival (Holzknecht, 2007; Schutte, 2018; Taormina & Gao, 2013). However, in a university environment, there can be many safety and security concerns. Despite the

efforts of universities to find supportive faculty members, there still exist instances in which faculty members abuse their position of power and mistreat students (The Change Leader Inc., n.d.). For example, in a survey study investigating the incidence and prevalence of sexual harassment in graduate students in colleges, harassment was reported to have been most frequently perpetuated by faculty members, versus fellow graduate students, undergraduate students, non-university persons, or other individuals (Lorenz et al., 2019). In addition, university faculty and staffs' ethical codes tend to be reactive rather than proactive; therefore, the codes address events in the past rather than working to prevent future harmful situations (Kelley et al., 2006).

Power Inequality

Many safety and security concerns arise from the power inequalities inherent in higher education. Much of the issue may be due to the little training in ethical behavior received in doctoral studies (Scurr, 2018). While some institutions attempt to integrate the teaching of ethical behavior in academic course plans, this approach relies on instructors with varying levels of motivation and training in the teaching of ethics (Scurr, 2018); thus, it is not as effective as requiring doctoral students to take stand-alone ethics courses. In fact, there are more codes of conduct in place for students (74%) than for employees (staff-specific policies 37%; faculty-specific policies 33%; Kelley et al., 2006). Many companies in the business sector provide an ethics hotline and have thorough mandated ethics trainings; however, this is not apparent in universities and only approximately 200 universities (i.e., 15%) in the USA and Canada have ombudsperson¹⁵ offices (Kelley et al., 2006). For students to thrive, they must first feel that they are in a safe learning environment and can trust those they interact with. In the CoE and SECT, for those faculty members, practicum supervisors, internship supervisors, or internship directors who are not AMTA members, there are no ramifications for unethical behavior in an educational context. For example, in section 6.1.1, the AMTA (2021) establishes the following tenets as essential for an individual to qualify to be a music therapy undergraduate higher educator:

6.1.1 *Undergraduate Faculty*: An individual employed full-time at a college or university with primary responsibilities for teaching music therapy and/or directing a music therapy program at the undergraduate level.

- Holds an appropriate professional credential or designation in music therapy;
- Holds a master's degree in music therapy or related area, with a minimum of transcribed graduate credits equivalent to 12 semester hours or the equivalent of graduate credits in music therapy beyond the undergraduate equivalency requirements;
- Has at least three years of full-time clinical experience in music therapy or its equivalent in part-time work;
- Pursues continuing education relevant to his/her teaching responsibilities;
- Demonstrates the following: mastery of all professional level and applicable advanced competencies in music therapy; effectiveness as a music therapy clinician in at least one area of practice; the ability to teach and clinically supervise undergraduate students; and the ability to organize and administer an undergraduate music therapy program.

Although the SECT outlines the necessary educational and work experiences for eligible music therapy undergraduate educators, it does not require faculty members to abide by a certain ethical code. In addition, even though faculty members must hold an appropriate music therapy credential (i.e., MT-BC credential), they are not required to be AMTA professional members. This is identical for individuals who are practicum supervisors, university affiliated internship supervisors, and university-affiliated internship directors. The only exceptions are individuals who are national roster internship supervisors or

national roster internship directors, as they are required to be AMTA professional members (American Music Therapy Association, 2017). As a result, faculty members, practicum supervisors, and university affiliated internship directors/supervisors may not be held to the ethical behavior described and required in the *AMTA Code of Ethics* (American Music Therapy Association, 2019). To ensure students have positive educational experiences, there should be more solidified consequences for unethical behavior.

Student Protection

To provide a safe and conducive learning environment, instructors should maintain the standards of academic performance required to teach music therapy academic courses or supervise students in their music therapy practicum or internship experiences (Hamilton, 2002). However, few resources exist about current protective favors (e.g., laws, institutional codes) advocating for the ethical conduct of instructors to protect students and interns from possible abuses of power.

Universities

Most protective measures in place at the university-level include those that protect students' right to privacy and rights against discrimination. First, as stated in the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (1974), once a student has reached or exceeded 18 years of age, the student has the right to review their educational records, which are maintained by each institution. Students also have the right to request their educational records be revised in the case of error or misuse, and if the institution chooses not to correct the errors, the student then has the right to a formal hearing. Only the student has access to educational records, unless the student provides written verification that other individuals may access and view their educational records (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 1974). However, the "records" referred to in the FERPA policy refers only to identifiable student information (e.g., grade point average [GPA], personal information); thus, faculty members and university staff members are urged to report deviances in behavior and can disseminate anonymized student records (McDonald, n.d.).

The *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* is another act which endeavors to minimize and/or prevent discrimination against individuals with disabilities in communications, transportation, public accommodations, employment, and access to local and state government services and programs (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). According to the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (n.d.-a), an individual can be classified as having a disability if they: (a) have a mental or physical impairment that limits one or more of their major life activities; (b) have a consistent record of the impairment; and (c) are considered as having the corresponding impairment. The *ADA* applies to any business or institution with 15 or more individuals (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a); therefore, universities are held to these standards regarding both their employees and enrolled students. According to the *ADA*, reasonable accommodations can include:

- Making existing facilities used by employees readily accessible to and usable by persons with disabilities;
- Job restructuring, modifying work schedules, reassignment to a vacant position;
- Acquiring or modifying equipment or devices, adjusting or modifying examinations, training materials, or policies, and providing qualified readers or interpreters (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a).

If the given institution does not comply with presented issues, they will be considered as posing "undue hardship" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). The

ADA also prevents institutions from retaliating against individuals with disabilities based on disability or for filing a discrimination charge, participating in an investigation, litigation, or proceeding, or by testifying (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-a). However, students are frequently wary of disclosing their disability due to potential negative consequences associated with stigma (Bulk et al., 2017). Research has found that only 35% of students who received disability services in high school self-disclosed their disability in higher education institutions and that one third of students with disabilities believed faculty members would view them negatively if they did so (Mamboleo et al., 2020).

Like the *ADA*, Title IX prevents any institution or any educational activity or program that receives federal funds from discriminating against an individual based on sex (Education Amendments Act of 1972, 1972). However, students who face sexual discrimination or other forms of misconduct and report the situation(s) to their university's Title IX coordinator become entrenched in an arduous process that may find the perpetrator not guilty despite copious evidence of the contrary (Tyne, 2022). Therefore, many victims hesitate at reporting their situations, in fear of further harm. Title IV of the *Civil Rights Act of 1964* also prevents discrimination based on color, race, sex, national origin, and religion in universities and public schools (U.S. Department of Justice, 2021). However, Title IV does not provide sufficient protections because if there is a violation, it is the affected student's responsibility to file a lawsuit against the institution to rectify the situation, which would likely lead to negative fiscal, social, and academic effects.

Internships

After students have completed their music therapy academic coursework, they move on to the next stage in their educational journey: internship. Although music therapy interns continue receiving clinical supervision throughout internship, as they did in practicum, they take on many of the responsibilities of a professional music therapist such as: (a) having their own client caseload; (b) conducting and writing reports for assessments; (c) writing goals; (d) planning treatment; (e) developing and using appropriate music therapy interventions; and (f) communicating progress with clients' families and treatment teams (Walker, 2012). When possible, music therapy interns typically conduct their internship on a full-time (i.e., 40-hours per week) basis. At the time of this publication, most existing internship sites do not provide compensation to interns, which may be found not in compliance on a case-by-case basis by the U.S. Department of Labor according to the *Fair Labor Standards Act* (FLSA).

According to the U.S. Department of Labor (2018), the FLSA is a law in the USA which establishes recordkeeping, minimum wage, overtime pay, and youth employment standards in the private sector, and in local, state, and federal governments (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). In other words, industries "engaged in commerce or in the production of goods for commerce, of labor conditions detrimental to the maintenance of the minimum standard of living necessary for health, efficiency, and general-wellbeing of workers" (U.S. Wage and Hour Division, 2011, p. 1). Individuals covered under the FLSA are entitled to receive pay of at least the federal minimum wage (i.e., \$7.25 per hour) and at least one and one-half times the regular pay rate for overtime pay (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.). The FLSA is relevant to the music therapy profession as it includes enterprise that are:

engaged in the operation of a hospital, an institution primarily engaged in the care of the sick, the aged, or the mentally ill or defective who reside on the premises of such institution, a school for mentally or physically handicapped or gifted children, a preschool, elementary or secondary school, or an institution of higher education (regardless of whether or not such

hospital, institution, or school is public or private or operated for profit or not for profit). (U.S. Wage and Hour Division, 2011, p. 11)

As a music therapy internship of at least 900 hours is integral to the undergraduate music therapy educational plan (American Music Therapy Association, 2021b), an investigation of the FLSA was necessary to determine if music therapy interns are being treated in an equitable and ethical manner. According to the ruling in *Glatt. v. Fox Searchlight Pictures, Inc.* 791 F 3rd, which clarified the role of interns in the FLSA, interns must satisfy all seven areas of the “primary beneficiary test” to be classified as “employees” within companies (Harvard Law Review, 2016). If they gain the classification of “employee”, they are entitled to at least a minimum wage and overtime pay. The tenets of the “primary beneficiary test” are:

1. The extent to which the intern and the employer clearly understand that there is no expectation of compensation. Any promise of compensation, express[ed] or implied, suggests that the intern is an employee and vice versa.
2. The extent to which the internship provides training that would be similar to that which would be given in an educational environment, including the clinical and other hands-on training provided by educational institutions.
3. The extent to which the internship is tied to the intern’s formal education program by integrated coursework or the receipt of academic credit.
4. The extent to which the internship accommodates the intern’s academic commitments by corresponding to the academic calendar.
5. The extent to which the internship’s duration is limited to the period in which the internship provides the intern with beneficial learning.
6. The extent to which the intern’s work complements, rather than displaces, the work of paid employees while providing significant educational benefits to the intern.
7. The extent to which the intern and the employer understand that the internship is conducted without entitlement to a paid job at the conclusion of the internship (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018, “The Test for Unpaid Interns and Students” section).

The vague language of the FLSA and the unusual structure of music therapy internships leads to confusion as to whether interns should be paid a minimum wage and overtime. Therefore, if it appears that individuals satisfy all seven tenets of the “primary beneficiary test,” they are classified as “employees,” and thus, under U.S. law, should be paid at least a minimum wage and overtime pay.

Recommendations to Mitigate Threats to Safety and Security

In totality, music therapy education entails the teaching of budding music therapists. To aid undergraduate music therapy students reach their highest potential, music therapy educators (i.e., music therapy faculty, practicum supervisors, internship directors/supervisors), should consider how to better nurture and support students through their educational development. Harmful or unsupportive interactions with educators may lead to a disruption in development and prevent corresponding students from progressing and meeting their full potential. To address these “safety-security needs,” educators may consider taking the following actions: (a) preventative measures against oppression, harassment, and sexual harassment; (b) prevention of the appropriation of intellectual property; and (c) reassessment of the current music therapy internship structure.

Oppression, Harassment, and Sexual Harassment

Students may experience oppression, harassment, or sexual harassment with teaching assistants, supervisors, or faculty members. Oppression is defined as “the power one group has to influence or control a subordinate group and the privilege the powerful derive from said control” (Bybee, 2013, p.1). Oppression is an umbrella term that encompasses many systemic injustices and inequalities including prejudice, discrimination, sexism, racism, ableism, ageism, and homophobia (Bybee, 2013).

Harassment is defined as “unwelcome conduct that is based on race, color, religion, sex (including sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy), national origin, older age (beginning at age 40), disability, or genetic information” (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-b, para. 2). Harassment is deemed illegal when it creates a hostile or abusive work environment, or if the conduct becomes a factor in continued employment (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, n.d.-b). Sexual harassment includes any “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual... [favors], and other verbal or physical harassment in nature” (Rostami, 2021, p. 1). Sexual harassment pertains to non-erotic and erotic physical touching, nonsexual dual relationships or other implications, and self-disclosure of certain personal issues (Ozcan et al., 2013). To work towards remedying possible situations of harassment and sexual harassment, students need to receive ample education upon their matriculation to a university about their protections (e.g., Title IX) and rights.

Appropriation of Intellectual Property

In higher education environments, instructors may appropriate intellectual property created by students, colleagues, or other researchers. For the purpose of this article, appropriation of intellectual property, or plagiarism, is defined as literary theft, or the presentation of an idea as new when it comes from an already existing source (Martin et al., 2009). Acts of plagiarism often occur due to the pressure institutions place on researchers to publish scholarly work (Anderson, 2010). Although students are frequently taught not to plagiarize and are instructed of the punishments of plagiarism, there is little to prevent educators from plagiarizing either their colleagues or their students. For example, the peer review process, which is typically utilized in the publication process for academic research journals, allows a potential mechanism for the appropriation of intellectual property through access to unpublished essays and research studies (Anonymous, personal communication, February 16, 2023). In all, instructor plagiarism is increasing, with as many as 50 dismissals of tenured professors each academic year due to serious violations (Becker, 2019).

If a faculty member or supervisor plagiarizes, an investigation and the final ruling about whether the educator in question is guilty is often made by the educator’s institution, according to the COPE Council (2019), who govern the ethics of published articles. Therefore, a conflict of interest is apparent, which may lead to impaired judgements, decisions, or actions in the workplace, and biased conclusions (University of Central Florida, n.d.). For example, in Becker’s (2019) phenomenological study, they found that students who experienced faculty plagiarism and advocated for their intellectual property to be recognized were unable to find adequate support inside or outside the university. In an example within the field of music therapy, Murakami (2022) indicated her intellectual property on music and harm (Murakami, 2021) was appropriated by other prominent researchers in the field (Silverman et al., 2020) during her master’s degree coursework. However, an investigation by the first author’s university concluded no plagiarism or misconduct occurred. Nevertheless, in a corrigendum¹⁶ (Silverman et al., 2022) the authors apologized and cited Murakami’s original podcast (Murakami & Goldschmidt, 2018).

Internship Structure

Lastly, the current music therapy internship system may require reevaluation. From a review of the educational structure of several major healthcare professions (i.e., speech-language pathology, physical therapy, occupational therapy), the author found the music therapy profession’s internship system to be starkly different than the other professions. As seen in Table 1, music therapy and speech-language pathology students conduct their “internship” or “fellowship” experience after they have completed all academic coursework and supervised practicum experiences. Conversely, physical therapy and occupational therapy students conduct all clinical components of their education during coursework. In fact, physical therapy students complete approximately 1,440 hours of direct clinical experiences prior to the completion of their education (The George Washington University, n.d.). Thus, to create a more ethical internship experience, the music therapy internship system itself should be reexamined.

Table 1. Structure of Clinical Education of Major Healthcare Professions in the USA.

Profession	Duration	Full/Part-time	Average Pay	When Do Students Complete This Portion of Their Training?
Speech-Language Pathology	1 year	Full-time	\$84,065	After all coursework and supervised practicum have been completed
Physical Therapy	3 years	Part-time	Not applicable since occurs concurrently with coursework	During Doctorate of Physical Therapy (DPT) coursework. Average DPT students spend an average of 27.5 weeks in their first clinical placement.
Occupational Therapy	Level I and Level II fieldwork experiences	Part-time	Not applicable since occurs concurrently with coursework	During occupational therapy coursework
Music Therapy	6-9 months	Either full-time or part-time	Typically no pay	After all coursework and supervised practicum experiences have been completed

Note: Sourced from American Physical Therapy Association, n.d.; American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, n.d.; Glassdoor, 2021; The American Occupational Therapy Association Inc, 2009; The George Washington University, n.d.

The current structure of music therapy internships, in which interns are often paid little to no money for their clinical work, may cause the perpetuation of the exclusivity of the music therapy field. In other words, many who wish to enter the music therapy community may be unable to do so because of financial concerns. Initial clinical training requirements for internship were developed by NAMT in the 1950s, and then combined with AAMT requirements in the 1990s (American Music Therapy Association, n.d.-b). Since the time that initial requirements were created, minimal changes have occurred in the field, and I found no mention of the basis for the initial requirements in the extant literature.

Under the 2018 updated version of the FLSA, individuals who satisfy the seven factors on the “primary beneficiary test,” are entitled to receive both at least minimum wage and overtime pay (U.S. Department of Labor, 2018). Enterprises covered by the FLSA include:

1. those that have an annual dollar volume of sales or business done of at least \$500,000;
2. hospitals, businesses providing medical or nursing care for residents, schools and preschools, and government agencies (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009, “Enterprise Coverage” section).

The music therapy internship structure occupies a gray area in which there is no clear distinction of whether interns are considered employees. Interns satisfy all seven tenets of the primary beneficiary test, and they work at organizations, businesses, or facilities classified as enterprises by the FLSA. However, since interns concurrently pay for tuition and receive academic credit at the same time as their internships, analysis of the FLSA shows litigation is necessary on a case-by-case basis to determine if the individual is considered an “employee” under the act (U.S. Department of Labor, 2009). To be more inclusive and to avoid possible FLSA litigation, the music therapy profession may want to consider revising the current internship requirements. To align more closely with the FLSA definition of “intern,” music therapy internships should correspond to the academic calendar, and the work of the intern should complement—not displace—the work of paid employees.

Conclusion

Music therapy education seeks to nurture the potential of pre-professional music therapists to become effective Board-Certified Music Therapists. For students to reach their highest degree of self-fulfillment, they must be educated in a safe and secure environment which has their best interests in mind. This concept is especially important due to students’ developmental stage of emerging adulthood. To remediate many of the safety/security concerns music therapy students may face that could negatively affect their development as an emerging adult, researchers, educators, and those involved in organizational leadership can consider the following action steps: (a) preventative measures against oppression, harassment, and sexual harassment; (b) prevention of the appropriation of intellectual property; and (c) reassessment of the current music therapy internship structure.

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¹⁰ “will serve as a positive role model for students and interns regarding professional behavior, most especially regarding ethical behavior; assuring that students learn about and operate under the guidelines of this Code” (AMTA, 2019, section 5.4).

¹¹ Research has shown that many universities in the USA, many of which are predominately White, find it a challenge to provide students of color a positive multiracial environment (Spann, 2023). In addition, students with disabilities often face challenges in college classrooms. For example, an administrator at a large university shared how one special education professor frequently ridiculed Autistic students in their classroom by stating that Autistic students lacked intellectual capacity in comparison to nondisabled students (Anonymous, personal communication, November 1, 2022).

¹² The first section of the CoE states that, “Members of the AMTA Ethics Board are a resource for consultation and support for AMTA members and the public who may have questions, concerns or be faced with ethical dilemmas. A list of current Ethics Board Members can be found here. More information for AMTA members from the Ethics Board can be found here. If you have a question, concern, or complaint related to the AMTA Code of Ethics, please contact a member of the Ethics Board using our secure email address: amtaethics@hushmail.com” (AMTA, 2019).

¹³ The conduct of faculty members and/or internship/practicum supervisors does not impact the re-approval status of the program.

¹⁴ For example, in November 2023, Baker (2023) reported that from the amalgamation of several investigations, it was brought to light that the then president of Stanford University, Marc Tessier-Lavigne, manipulated images in several of his well-known publications, which led to the retraction of at least three research studies. Even though Tessier-Lavigne stepped down as president of the university, as he had tenure, he chose to remain at the institution as a biology professor and continue running the research lab that disseminated egregiously fraudulent data, through five research manuscripts published across more than one decade (Louallen, 2023).

¹⁵ Ombudspersons seek to assist others in the resolution of concerns or conflicts (International Ombudsman Association, 2022; Kelley et al., 2006).

¹⁶ A corrigendum documents errors in a published work that does not change the central conclusions; thus, does not require a retraction of the work (Framework for Open and Reproducible Research Training, 2021).