

Book Review

Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy

Susan Hadley (Editor)

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Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy, edited by Susan Hadley, continues Barcelona Publishers' series that explores social themes such as racism and colonialism in music therapy. The series began in 2006 with another collection edited by Hadley, *Feminist Perspectives in Music Therapy*. As Hadley explains in her introduction, *Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy* elaborates one of her final assignments for the Master of Music Therapy Students at Slippery Rock University in Pennsylvania. The invited authors in this new book courageously share explorations of their sociocultural identities through personal histories and experiences in music therapy education and practice.

Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy is a lengthy and powerful publication that includes 18 chapters by individual authors, as well as an introduction and afterword by Hadley. In the introduction (pp. 3–25), "Conceptual Origins and Theoretical Framing," Hadley invites readers to participate in their own critically reflexive process, to journey alongside the authors on their pathways towards personal awareness and social justice. Hadley writes eloquently about the complexities involved in group membership, timing, multiple relationships, connecting through music, patriarchy, culture, norms, and pedagogy. She concludes the introduction with a section called "What Lies Ahead?," in which she invites readers to critically engage with the book's stories by noting their responses to each chapter, whether positive or negative. This provides readers the opportunity to consider their personal values and beliefs as they relate to the book's content.

While the focus of individual chapters is clearly conveyed through their titles, each chapter must be read to truly understand the significance of each story. The amalgam of these stories invites readers to experience the field of music therapy through the lives of writers who have been and continue to be systemically oppressed. These experiences offer readers an entry point to consider inclusive pathways forwards for music therapy by generating increasingly equitable, accessible, inclusive, and diverse representation across the field.

In her conclusion, "Afterword: Reflections and Strategies" (pp. 399–413), Hadley invites readers to further our critically reflexive journeys, as informed by the book's content. She provides opportunities and processes for continued learning through exercises that she calls "Strategies for Cultivating Sociocultural Reflexivity," including: (a) I Am, (b) Softening Exercise, (c) Values Inventory, (d) Recognizing Microaggressions, (e) Cultural and Critical Genograms, (f) Artistic Cultural Reflexivity, and (g) Preparing for Difficult Dialogues.

In the final reflections of her "Afterword," Hadley offers three quotes that the collections' authors shared with her after they had read the book. These reflections, which describe how reading *Sociocultural Identities in Music Therapy* furthered authors' critical reflexivity, resonated profoundly with me in terms of my experience reading and working through the contents—an experience I imagine most readers will echo.

Even though the authors come from distinct backgrounds and experiences, the book has an American context: 16 of the authors study and/or work in the United States, one author is an American living in Germany, and the final author lives in Japan. This American focus could have limited the value of these stories for people living outside of the United States; instead, the critically reflexive narratives reveal common human truths. For example, the theme of recommending ongoing critical self-reflection towards increased ethicality and social justice in music therapy runs throughout the book. Further, the authors offer a strong critique of their Eurocentric music therapy education for its reliance on privilege, alongside its denial of systemic oppression. The authors question who gets to define "better" and how that is manifested in music therapy, from questions of pedagogy and curriculum, research

methods, and models of practice, to normalization rather than maximization goals. Overall, the contributors to this volume deserve our respect for having the courage to publish their stories and experiences for the purpose of moving towards a more socially just future in the field of music therapy and beyond.

Despite their primary ties to the United States, the authors' diverse contexts give the book breadth and depth. As I read each chapter, I found myself immersed in each author's personal history and music therapy story, and their experiences have enriched the context in which I practise music therapy. These readings and processes will prove useful to all music therapy students, educators, researchers, and practitioners, offering contemporary and much needed self-reflexive social justice learning across our field. At 442 pages, the book is well-designed and easily accessible, particularly due to a helpful index. I highly recommend this book.

References

Hadley, S. (Ed.). (2006). *Feminist perspectives in music therapy*. Barcelona Publishers.

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Sue Baines is a music therapy scholar/practitioner, author, and speaker, and a professional musician. She practices in long-term care, is an instructor in the Bachelor of Music Therapy program at Capilano University, and researches Anti-Oppressive Music Therapy theory, practice, pedagogy, education, and curriculum. Sue is a graduate of the University of Calgary (BMus, 1984), Wilfrid Laurier University (BMT, 1989), New York University (MA, 1992) and the University of Limerick (PhD, 2014). She serves on the review boards of the *Canadian Journal of Music Therapy and The Arts in Psychotherapy* and is a member of the Canadian Association of Music Therapists' Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Committee.